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Leaving Certificate English
Higher Level Examination Paper

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: It is important to note that the focus here is on the written text only. Do not refer to the images in your answer. This is a basic comprehension question, testing your knowledge of the extract. As always, you must focus on the key words in the question. In this case they are 'the insights Andrew Dickson shares' about the play. Do not simply give a summary of Dickson's views, but pick out those parts of it in which he shows a deep and accurate understanding of the nature of the play. You should keep an eye out for words and/or phrases which show that the writer has reflected on the play and come to a new understanding of it. This is what insights are. In this case, examples of key phrases are 'I saw something new'; 'I'd forgotten altogether', and 'It occurred to me'.

Sample Plan:
Play is more than a comedy; it has a serious message about exile and separation
Has as much relevance for modern audience as it did for Elizabethan audience
Deals with the nature of travel

Sample Answer:

Dickson shares a number of insights into *The Comedy of Errors*. He observes that the play has long been dismissed as little more than a rather clumsy comedy but, having seen the modern version, Dickson realises it has an important message. Beneath the humour is the serious theme of the suffering caused by exile and separation. Seeing the play set in contemporary Kabul allowed Dickson to fully appreciate both the anxiety of a father searching for his missing sons and the difficulty of being an illegal immigrant in an unfriendly country.

TIP: The question asked you to use your own words so you should summarise and rephrase Dickson's points about the play.

Dickson has also come to understand fully how the play could have relevance for a contemporary audience. Although the play was written to appeal to an Elizabethan audience whose ideology and culture would be quite different from their modern day counterparts in Kabul, it evokes laughter and reflection in the same way that it did when originally performed, showing that its message and appeal is universal.

TIP: Where possible, show that your answer is well-structured by using link words and phrases between paragraphs.

The final insight that Dickson shares about the *The Comedy of Errors* is that it deals with the issue of travel and how it feels to be a stranger in a strange land. Travel, Dickson says, sometimes exceeds expectations and sometimes fall short. The characters in the play are at times confused and make mistakes, but they discover more than their lost family members: they discover that the realities of life in another land can be outside the realms of what they could ever have imagined. Dickson appreciates now how much the play has to say about coping and finding your way in another country and culture.

TIP: It is vital to link your quotation or reference to the question and the point you are making in relation to it.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: You are only asked to talk about one poster in detail here but you may briefly refer to the others if you feel it will help your case.

You are not asked to comment on any specific production, such as the one mentioned in the text, but to reflect on what you have learned about the theme or themes of the play and to choose a poster which you feel expressed that.

Remember, the visual text includes the text of the posters, the fonts used, the colours of the text etc.

Be sure to comment on the *link* between the visual and the written text.

As this is a fifteen-mark question, you should aim to make three well-developed points.

Sample Plan:

Poster 2

We see half of each face – together they make a whole. One brother aware; one unaware

Facial expressions a mixture of anxiety and humour

Elegant presentation: muted palette etc.

Sample Answer:

The poster which I feel most effectively advertises a production of the play, *The Comedy of Errors* is Poster 2.

The main body of the poster is a drawing of two identical faces, side by side. We only see half of each face, which I feel perfectly reflects the idea of the twins searching for their other half in order to be made whole. It is also significant that the twin on the right is glancing sideways at his brother who stares ahead, seemingly oblivious. This is a clever way of showing that one pair of brothers is searching but the other pair is unaware of this.

TIP: Your opening sentence should make your approach to the question crystal clear. The posters are numbered, so it is best to use the labelling given on the exam paper.

The expressions on the brothers' faces are a mixture of anxiety and amusement. On the one hand their eyebrows are slightly raised and their foreheads furrowed, suggesting they are ill at ease, but on the other hand the corners of their mouths are turned up at the edge as if they are about to break into a smile. Dickson says that there is 'farce aplenty' in the play but that there is also much that is fraught. The brothers' facial expressions subtly but effectively convey this blend of emotions.

The final reason I consider this poster the most effective advertisement for the play is that it is understated. Dickson says that *The Comedy of Errors* has long been dismissed as a 'creaky and mechanistic farce' with 'corny sight gags' and he feels that this is selling the play short. It has, he believes, a serious message to impart about 'exile and separation'. Poster 2 is elegantly simple with the two faces set against a backdrop of beautifully decorated panels. The colours are muted and the limited palette of browns, greens, reds and yellows gives the poster an air of sophistication, as does the simple, clean font detailing only the times and places of the performances. There is no description of the play, which I think is a good way of ensuring an open-minded audience. Dickson says he learned something new by watching the play and I believe this poster supports the idea that those who go to see *The Comedy of Errors* should do so without any preconceived ideas in order to fully appreciate its complexities.

TIP: When discussing the visual text, you must go into detail. Comment on colours, composition, lighting or whatever else is appropriate.

TIP: Make sure to link any comments about the visual text to the written text as the question asks you to comment on both.

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (iii) (20)

Note: This is a complex question and it is unusual in that it requires you to discuss aspects of literature that would normally be dealt with in Paper 2. Again, it is essential to read the question carefully and highlight or number each part of it. Planning is key here in order to ensure that you deal with every part of the question as there is a lot to be covered.

1. Timeless
2. Global
3. Refer to written AND visual texts
4. Refer to at least one other Shakespearean drama you know (Single Text and/or Shakespearean play you studied for the Junior Certificate would be easiest)

You do not, of course, have to divide these aspects of the question into separate points in your answer. I found it easiest to deal with timeless and global together when discussing the plays and the visual texts.

Sample Plan:
Plays deal with themes and aspects of human nature
The Comedy of Errors deals with themes of exile, separation and travel
Romeo and Juliet is about love and conflict – works in any setting
King Lear is about family breakdown, power struggles etc.
Posters show play works in modern USA. Bollywood has no connection with Shakespearean England but play translates well

Sample Answer:

I agree that Shakespeare's plays have both timeless and global qualities. I believe the reason for this is that the plays explore themes and aspects of human nature that are common to people throughout the world and throughout history.

In this text, Dickson says that *The Comedy of Errors* works well when set in contemporary Kabul because it deals with relationships, separation, exile and what it really feels like to travel. These are issues with which anyone can identify or relate to so it does not matter where and when the play is set. Indeed, Dickson says that he actually 'saw something quite new' and gained a greater understanding of the themes at the heart of the play by watching the Rah-e-Sabz performance.

TIP: You don't have to keep using the words 'timeless' and 'global'. Vary your vocabulary wherever possible while showing the examiner that you are sticking to the terms of the question.

Similarly, when I studied *Romeo and Juliet* for my Junior Certificate, I was struck by how perfectly a play set in Renaissance Italy translates to modern-day Los Angeles. Baz Luhrmann's film version proves that it is love and conflict that lie at the heart of the play and give it its timeless and global qualities. *Romeo and Juliet* is about a pair of 'star-crossed lovers' struggling to be together in a hostile world and that story could be set anywhere, at any time.

King Lear is a play with which every Leaving Certificate student is familiar, and it might be tempting to think it is firmly rooted in ancient Britain, but of course it is not. The reason for this, again, is that it is Shakespeare's exploration of human nature that makes the play so compelling. Family breakdown, power struggles, betrayal, love and lust are not particular to any specific place or time period.

The posters which accompany the extract from Dickson's book support the idea of Shakespeare's plays being timeless and global. They advertise performances in Texas, California and New Hampshire, for example, and it is fair to say that these places are 'geographically and ideologically remote' from Shakespeare's England. Poster 3 even advertises a spectacular and vibrant Bollywood production of the play. That *The Comedy of Errors* can be presented as an Indian musical extravaganza proves that Shakespeare's work has relevance for all.

TIP: The question asked you to comment on the visual texts as well as the written text but you are not required to give equal treatment to both.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION B (50)

Note: This is quite a complex question and, as always, it should be read carefully and the key words highlighted or underlined. Be sure to plan your answer carefully or you may find you go into great detail about one poster and then realise you are running out of time and have to skip quickly over the appeal of the second poster.

Sample Plan:

It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin your Question B answer:

1. What form should this task take?

This is a speech.

2. What should the content be?

You are required to deal with each of the following:

- A detailed analysis of and personal response to the appeal of two of the visual texts
- An explanation of their effectiveness in promoting the play to a contemporary audience (it is important to read the written text too as it explains the appeal of the play to modern audiences)
- An element of comparison in which you explain why one is better than the other

3. Who is my audience?

Your audience is not specified here but the posters are advertising high-school, college, amateur and professional performances of the play so it is safe to assume that the audience is mixed.

4. What register should I use?

Use features of the language of argument and/or persuasion when explaining your judgement. Show audience awareness and make it clear that this is a speech, not an article. You will also need to use aesthetic language when describing the visual appeal of the poster.

Sample Answer:

Good evening everybody, and thank you for coming to this anniversary celebration of the life and works of William Shakespeare.

TIP: When planning your speech, it can be helpful to jot down a reminder to address the audience at the beginning, once or twice in the middle of the speech and again at the end.

I have been asked by the committee to judge the poster advertisements for *The Comedy of Errors* and it has not been an easy task, I can tell you. The standard of entries was exceptionally high and it was extremely difficult to choose only two winning entries from among the dozens of brilliant, visually appealing, powerfully effective advertisements we received over the last number of weeks.

The criteria I used for judging the entries were the visual appeal of the poster and its effectiveness in promoting a production of *The Comedy of Errors* to a contemporary audience. If you look at the screen behind me, you can see the four finalists from which I selected the first and second prize-winners. Starting with second place, I would like you to join me in congratulating the students from Houston, Texas who submitted poster number 3.

As you can see, this poster is instantly eye-catching with its riot of colours and its exotic Bollywood setting. At first glance, it seems an unlikely and unusual way to advertise a Shakespearean play, but that is exactly why I thought it so appropriate for a modern audience. It indicates a new approach to an old story and that will attract both those who know the play and would like to see a fresh approach to it and those who may have been inclined to dismiss a Shakespeare play as old-fashioned and dull. There is nothing dull about this poster and it promises that the highschool's production will provide a great evening's entertainment!

TIP: You must link any point you make to the question asked.

If you look closely at the poster, you can see a number of shuttered windows and you will notice that some of the shutters are closed, some ajar and some wide open. This is intriguing as it suggests things that are hidden from us, partially known or visible to all. Of course, this fits in perfectly with the farcical nature of *The Comedy of Errors* and the cheerful, brightly-coloured strings of lanterns hanging from the windows lead us to believe that discovering that which is hidden will be fun! I'm sure you agree with me that this marvellous poster will open a new window on Shakespeare for a new generation of theatre-goers.

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And now it is time to announce the winner of the first prize. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a big round of applause to the Shakespeare On The Sound Company who submitted poster number 2.

TIP: It is all too easy for a speech to become an opinion piece and be indistinguishable from an article, say, so it is vital to show audience awareness from time to time.

As you can see, this is also an unusual and intriguing poster. I was particularly struck by the simple but effective placing side by side of two halves of two identical faces. I'm sure you will agree with me that this is a subtle but highly effective way of expressing the idea of twins who need to find their other half in order to be made whole, which is the essence of the play. The brothers' expressions are a blend of bemusement and amusement: their eyebrows are slightly raised and their foreheads furrowed, yet the corners of their mouths are turned slightly upward as if they are about to break into a smile. This skilful use of something as simple as facial expressions to convey both the comedy and the tension at the heart of *The Comedy of Errors* hints at a play that has great depth. This sophisticated treatment is bound to attract a modern, discerning audience.

The colours are muted and the limited palette of browns, greens, reds and yellows also gives the poster an air of sophistication, as does the simple, clean font detailing only the times and places of the performances. There is a contemporary feel to the poster that I believe will certainly appeal to today's theatre-goers.

TIP: If you have read the sample answers to Question A (ii) you will notice that there is some overlap between that and this answer. However, it is not important as you will never be answering Question A and Question B on the same text.

Once again, I would like to congratulate tonight's prize winners and to thank all of those who entered our poster competition. Mine may not have been an easy task but it was certainly a pleasant one! Thank you all for supporting our event and I hope you enjoy the rest of the evening's entertainment.

TEXT TWO – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: This is a question about Ray's state of mind and the feelings he experiences on his journey.

Look out for words and phrases which tell you how he may be feeling, but also pay attention to metaphors and symbols.

Sample Plan:
Anxious – has to force himself to stay calm by making lists of positives
Marginalised and lonely – world is full of uncaring strangers; girl in post office makes him feel small
Empathic and kind – cares for his dog and tries to see the world through his eyes

Sample Answer:

Ray is deeply anxious as he travels through unknown territory. He imagined that breaking free from his routine would be a positive thing, but finds instead that it is terrifying. He is so angst-ridden that he almost forgets 'how to breathe' and is as tense as a stone. He is forced to resort to mentally listing all the good things in life and the reasons to carry on. Only by such effort of will can Ray stay calm and find the strength to cope with his current situation.

TIP: Each paragraph should contain a topic sentence which directly answers the question. This is usually at the beginning of the paragraph but there is no hard and fast rule saying that it always has to be in this position. The most important thing is that you have a topic sentence somewhere in your paragraph. The rest of the paragraph will support the point made in the topic sentence.

The new world through which Ray is journeying is a place in which he feels marginalised and lonely. He believes the houses he and One Eye pass are filled with 'uncaring strangers' and his directionless journey mirrors his directionless life. When he stops in a post office to withdraw some money, the girl behind the counter asks him to repeat his request three times and each time she does so, Ray feels 'smaller and smaller and smaller'. His lack of confidence is such that he sees her questions as a slight and feels embarrassed and unhappy. It seems to be a relief to him to drive away from the village and into 'cow fields again.'

Despite his anxiety and his loneliness, Ray is also empathic and kind. He cares so much for his dog that he is willing to flee his normal life to save him from a perceived danger. As they travel, Ray wonders what One Eye thinks, addressing him directly about what the dog smells and how he views the car journeys. When he leaves the dog in the car for a brief period, Ray reassuringly says, 'Back in a minute'. Ray's tenderness towards the dog shows he is able to feel compassion and understanding, even in the midst of his own worries and fears. He says he 'must go on' because of One Eye.

TIP: When possible, you should use link words or phrases at the start of your paragraphs to show that your answer is well-organised and planned.

TEXT TWO – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: The words 'to what extent' are key here. You do not have to say that this is either a wholly accurate or a wholly inaccurate portrayal of contemporary Ireland. Whatever option you choose, be sure to explain your choices.

Sample Plan:
Beauty of country roads side by side with potholes and ruts
Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland shown in abandoned road works, unfinished houses
Village shop is becoming obsolete

Sample Answer:

I believe that the portrayal of the rural and urban landscape of contemporary Ireland is an accurate one. Ray's journey along country roads is described in such a way as to make it instantly recognisable to anyone familiar with the Irish landscape. On the one hand there is the beauty of the 'lavender hedges' and ditches overflowing with scented wild flowers and fruits, and on the other hand there are the less attractive 'potholes wide as children's paddling pools' and 'ten thousand bottomless ruts' which are a feature of Irish country roads.

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The unpleasant realities of post-Celtic Tiger Ireland are also detailed in this extract. Ray notes the 'abandoned traffic cones' alerting drivers to road works that never actually take place, presumably because the money ran out during the recession. Later he passes an unfinished house which he rather mockingly describes as a 'palace', implying that it is ostentatious and out of place in an area dominated by 'featureless bungalows'. This is a symbol of the boom in property development followed by the crash and is an aspect of contemporary Ireland with which readers will be familiar.

TIP: It is very important to link your quotation and/or reference to the question you were asked.

It is when Ray is describing the typical village shop that I feel the author most authentically portrays modern Ireland. The shop is attached to a pub and the owner's Irish name is given in full over the door. Although this shop is still very much a part of rural Irish life, it is clear that its days are numbered. The shelves are dusty, the merchandise is odd and Ray says that such places 'never stock exactly what I think we want'. It is easy to see how such a business will be unable to hold its own against the competition of large supermarket chains and this reflects the changing nature of Irish life and the move away from local and independent to a more faceless, corporate world.

TEXT TWO – QUESTION A (iii) (20)

Note: You are asked here to discuss both narrative and aesthetic language but you do not have to give both equal treatment.

You are free to agree in whole or in part with the statement. Remember, however, that this is an award-winning novel.

It is important to note the words 'effectively engage the reader'. You cannot simply list the features of the two language genres; you must explain what effect these features have on the reader.

Sample Plan:
First person narration encourages empathy with Ray
Repetition creates idea journey is never-ending
Evocative and imaginative descriptions bring countryside to life
Symbolism allows us to see the world through Ray's eyes: it is a frightening place

Sample Answer:

I believe that the author uses narrative and aesthetic language to effectively engage the reader in the extract.

Baume's skilful use of first person narration encourages empathy with Ray as he addresses his beloved One Eye. Ray's admission that he finds the uncertainty of his fugitive status 'terrifying' and his need to list the good things in life and the reasons he must carry on is deeply poignant. Although he is a middle-aged man, Ray comforts himself by thinking about glass pebbles and football on the beach, for example. The insights we gain into Ray's thoughts and fears make us care about him and hope that there is a successful outcome to his flight from the authorities.

TIP: You must say how effective the techniques are in egaging the reader.

The author's clever use of repetition in this passage creates a sense that this car trip is never-ending. The first four paragraphs begin with the almost hypnotic chant, 'We are driving, driving, driving' which gives the impression that the journey is all-consuming. The fact that there is no mention of a destination reinforces the idea of Ray's directionless life and makes us wonder where this seemingly endless drive will take him.

The evocative and imaginative descriptions of the landscape through which the pair are driving brings the Irish countryside to life for the reader. There is a lyrical beauty to the portrayal of the country roads. Something as simple as broken stalks of ripened corn caught in ditches is likened to gold wire which 'dangles and glitters like premature tinsel'. The view through the windows is 'ceaselessly surging', an alliterative phrase which perfectly captures the quiet calm of the landscape through which Ray is travelling.

The author also uses symbolism to great effect to enable the reader to see the world from Ray's point of view and appreciate how frightening it can be. In the fifth paragraph, Ray describes the 'trail of massacred vegetation' left in the wake of the hedge trimming tractor and goes on to say that flowers have had their throats slit and berries have been chopped and popped. This violent language shows that Ray feels the world is a threatening place in which the innocent and the harmless can be destroyed and helps us to understand why he feels he and One Eye must flee the authorities.

TIP: It is vital to link your quotation or reference to the question and the point you are making in relation to it.

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TEXT 2 – QUESTION B **(50)**

Sample Plan:

It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin your Question B answer:

1. What form should this task take?

This is a written competition entry.

2. What should the content be?

- Identify the cinematic qualities in the extract
- Outline the aspects of contemporary Irish life you would like to capture in your film

3. Who is my audience?

- Your audience is not specified so you should assume that it is adults with a knowledge of the film-making industry.

4. What register should I use?

- Use features of the language of argument and/or persuasion when explaining your reasons for choosing this extract. You will also need to use aesthetic language when describing the cinematic qualities of the extract.

Sample Answer:

Sara Baume's writing has a cinematic quality that would make this extract from 'spill simmer falter wither' ideal for filming. Indeed, the main character describes his car journey as a 'neverending reel at a wraparound cinema,' and on reading the piece it is easy to see why he feels this way. The loveliness of the wildflowers and fruits which swell the ditches and narrow the road to a single lane is contrasted with the potholes, loose chippings and 'ten thousand bottomless ruts' which are so much a part of Irish country roads. Baume's lyrical evocation of the Irish countryside would make a film of this piece a visual feast. Her keen observation of the less attractive aspects of rural life would also be instantly recognisable to an Irish audience and would provide a realistic balance to the natural beauty.

TIP: You are free to discuss both aspects of the question – the extract's suitability for filming and the aspects of contemporary Irish life you would like to capture – in one paragraph or deal with them separately. The choice is yours.

The characters of Ray and One Eye are quirky and unusual and would undoubtedly engage an audience. The contrast between Ray's anxiety and One Eye's casual interest in the world around him creates an interesting tension and a certain amount of humour. We feel it would be most effective to have Ray address One Eye aloud as he wonders how the dog experiences the journey. There would be poignancy and humour in this approach. In the extract One Eye sits and gazes at the places they pass while trying valiantly to sniff the tantalising scents of the outside world. Ray is fleeing the authorities to save his dog, but by so doing he is subjecting them both to a nomadic and heartbreakingly lonely lifestyle in which the car becomes their home. However, the sadness of the pair's directionless journey would be relieved by a cut to One Eye licking a dead newt or lizard on one of his dawn walks. Such a balance would make the film's messages more palatable to an audience than unrelenting misery.

This extract from Baume's novel also offers an interesting and thought-provoking insight into contemporary Irish life. Ray represents those who feel marginalised and vulnerable in our community, and this is expressed perfectly by the description of the 'countless closed doors behind which are countless uncaring strangers'. A short film chronicling Ray's feelings of isolation and loneliness would be an excellent way to gently remind viewers that our society is not as inclusive or caring as we might wish and that it is perhaps time to focus on core values of compassion and understanding rather than focusing on the state of our economy.

The final aspect of modern Irish life that we would like to highlight in our film is the shallowness and temporary nature of wealth. Celtic Tiger Ireland was not an attractive place, marred as it was by greed and a desire to flaunt money that was borrowed at high interest to create an illusion of success. Ray describes the 'unfinished palace' at the end of an 'extensive driveway' and we feel that no commentary on this would be needed. We would have the camera zoom slowly from the electronic gate, past the mud that should have been a garden and linger for a moment on the unpainted façade and the empty windows. We believe that this rather sobering image would remind viewers that a headlong rush towards recovery should be tempered by the lessons learned from the past.

All of us in Ashgrove College would like to thank the judges in advance for considering our entry and we look forward to a favourable response.

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TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (I) (15)

Note: This is a basic comprehension question, testing your knowledge of the extract. As always, you must focus on the key words in the question. In this case they are 'the changing focus'. Do not simply give a summary of Obama's speech, but pick out those parts of it in which he discusses the new direction the space programme should take. What does he say it was like in the past and how does he envision the future?

Sample Plan:

There is no longer a space race; focus has moved from competition to collaboration

There is a move towards studying our climate and our world in order to protect it for future generations

The plan to return to the moon should be scrapped and NASA should explore further, learn more and partner with industry in order to do that.

Sample Answer:

The first point President Obama makes about the changing focus of America's space programme is that it is addressing different challenges and has different priorities than in the past. America is no longer involved in a space race with adversarial nations but is now working with them as the focus moves from competition to collaboration. This means that NASA can broaden its scope as it is not vying with competitors to achieve the same goal before they do.

TIP: This first sentence answers the question directly and indicates the direction the rest of the answer will take. Remember that if you mention something in an introduction, you must address it in the main body of the answer.

Secondly, Obama says that there is a move towards using NASA's technology to study our own world and our climate in order to protect it for future generations. The International Space Station will also be used to fulfil its original purpose, Obama claims, and will have its life extended in order to do this. Its function will be to carry out research that will have a positive impact on our daily lives while continuing to develop our capabilities in space.

Finally, the president reveals that there is no plan to return to the surface of the moon. He envisions a far more ambitious programme of exploration in which astronauts will land on the surface of asteroids, go into deep space and even reach the surface of Mars. He explains that government funding and partnership with industry will enable NASA to achieve these long-neglected goals.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: You are asked for your opinion here but remember to stick to the text as much as possible as a basis for your opinions. You should also note that you are being told quite clearly to focus on disadvantages only.

Sample Plan:

Focus is on space rather than on very real problems on earth: waste of money

The cost will be enormous and the benefits unknown

Reality is that nearly fifty years after landing on the moon we can do little more.

Sample Answer:

While President Obama's outline of NASA's space programme is exciting, I do not believe that it is technologically or financially feasible.

TIP: This is a test of your comprehension of Obama's speech, so it is important to use your own words, as stated in the question, and not to simply give a summary of the entire speech. Focus on the question at all times.

The first disadvantage I see in this plan is that it is focusing on the wrong issue. Space exploration is a luxury in a time when Americans are going through a period of serious financial difficulty as a result of the global recession. President Obama says that NASA will be given an additional six billion dollars on top of its existing budget over the next five years, and I think this level of funding will cause a great deal of public anger. Far from promoting NASA's cause, this may actually turn more American taxpayers against it which could have long-term repercussions.

I also believe that there is a serious flaw at the heart of this programme and that is that it is based on unknowns. Obama claims that investing in deep space travel will 'no doubt reap untold benefits' for people on Earth but this is a ridiculous statement as nobody can possibly say that for sure. It seems that he is willing to commit an enormous amount of money to a venture that has absolutely no guaranteed rewards.

The final disadvantage I see with this space programme is that it has little grounding in reality. In the nearly fifty years since the first moon landing, NASA has not managed to send a crewed mission to another planet. I find it hard to believe that a sudden injection of cash over the course of five years will make a radical difference to an organisation that has been working in this field since those first astronauts set foot on the moon. Obama's speech is full of wonderful ideas and dreams but there is no hard evidence that they will ever be more than that.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Note: This is quite a straightforward question on style in that the language genres are named and you are merely asked to comment on their effectiveness in promoting the space programme.

You are free to agree in whole or in part; you do not need to give equal treatment to informative and persuasive language so long as you deal with both.

As this is a twenty-mark question you should aim to write four well-developed points.

Sample Plan:
Informative: details of benefits of space exploration
Informative: outlines new programme in detail
Persuasive: intriguing rhetorical questions that would interest and enthuse audience
Personal anecdotes: humanise scientific endeavour and make public feel involved

Sample Answer:

I believe that President Obama uses both informative and persuasive language to great effect in this speech and that his words would be likely to win a great deal of support for the envisaged space programme.

It is clear that President Obama, or his speechwriter, put a great deal of effort into researching NASA's work in advance of this address in Florida. In the very first paragraph he details some of the technological advances that have resulted from space travel. His examples are drawn from a variety of fields and this adds weight to his argument as even those who may see little value in aerospace manufacturing would undoubtedly welcome developments in medical imaging and water purification.

TIP: You must comment on the likelihood of the informative language winning support for the space programme.

The president also uses informative language when discussing the future of the space programme. He gives predicted dates for crewed deep space missions, asteroid landings and even journeys to Mars. Such facts and figures make NASA's plans seem realistic and achievable and are likely to impress listeners. Similarly, he links the past benefits of space exploration to future rewards, claiming that the scientific advances resulting from tackling the challenges of shielding 'astronauts from radiation on longer missions', for example, will 'reap untold benefits right here on Earth'. This is an excellent way to win support for the programme as it tells the public that their lives will be improved by these breakthroughs.

The persuasive techniques used in this speech are highly effective in that they would almost certainly interest and enthuse any listeners. He uses rhetorical questions not only to intrigue but also to allay fears. In the fifth paragraph he wonders aloud how NASA will find ways of allowing astronauts to travel further into space than ever before stating firmly that these questions can and will be answered. I believe his audience would be hooked by the questions and excited by the president's assurance that NASA can find answers. However, Obama also acknowledges that there are those who want to know why they should 'spend money solving problems in space' rather than on Earth and once again he answers his own question confidently, saying that the space programme will generate both money and hope and thus improve lives. This would reassure his audience and ensure greater support.

Obama also cleverly takes an ambitious and highly-scientific topic and makes it relevant and personal to his listeners. He recalls an early memory of sitting on his grandfather's shoulders watching astronauts arrive in Hawaii and this rather charming little anecdote humanises the space programme and would likely make his audience view it positively. Similarly, he appeals to their patriotism, saying that not supporting the programme would be 'ceding our future' and an 'essential element of the American character'. I believe that this combination of the personal and the patriotic would gain support for NASA's space programme.

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TEXT 3 – QUESTION B (50)

Sample Plan:

It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin your Question B answer:

1. What form should this task take?

This is a blog post so it is an opinion piece similar to a feature article.

2. What should the content be?

- Oppose the spending of so much public money on the space programme and give your reasons
- Propose a better way of spending these public funds

3. Who is my audience?

- Your audience is public: anyone who reads your blog post. Bloggers usually have followers who read their posts regularly because they are interested in or share their views so it is reasonable to assume your readers will agree with what you write.

4. What register should I use?

- Use features of the language of argument and/or persuasion when making your case.
- Blog posts can be more informal than articles in newspapers and magazines in that they are not edited and do not have to present properly-researched evidence to support their points. They are primarily expressing the blogger's personal opinion. However, there is nothing to stop you from being formal and correct in your blog post. It is important to remember that this is an opportunity for you to show the examiner how well you can write.

Sample Answer:

What Planet Are You On, Mr Obama?

Posted on June 8th 2016 by Mike Wright

Like many of you, I tuned in to CNN last night to hear President Obama's speech at the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. I hoped to hear a measured message which acknowledged both the work done to date and the budgetary and ethical restraints on future space exploration. I am not naïve enough to have hoped for a winding down of NASA's work, but I did hope for a budget freeze at worst or a budget cut at best.

TIP: Blog posts, like articles, should have a title. You may also, if you wish for added authenticity, include your name and the date of posting. Don't forget that you must not use your own name in the exam. Underlining the title is a simple way to make it stand out and show that it is a title rather than the first line in the blog post.

However, what I heard instead was a series of sound bites and a pledge to invest $6 billion dollars in NASA over the next five years. It's fair to say that my heart sank when I heard our country's leader - an articulate and learned man who has the ear of the nation - commit so much public funding to an extravagant and wasteful use of our resources.

TIP: Blog posts are an expression of the writer's personal opinions so it is appropriate to write in the first person throughout.

President Obama argues that not furthering our exploration of space is 'ceding our future' which is ironic, to say the least. Our future is here, on this planet. That is the reality and our future is already in doubt because we have not invested anything like enough on combatting climate change, tackling poverty or even educating our children to the best of our ability so they might be able to make their world a better place when they come of age. Imagine what $6 billion dollars could do for our underfunded public schools or our hundreds of thousands of children who go to bed hungry every night. Of course, feeding and educating people is nothing like as glamorous or exciting as space travel, but it is a much more worthy ambition.

The President argues that NASA's work in space will 'reap untold benefits right here on Earth' but this is faulty logic. Certainly, discoveries have been made as a result of NASA's work, but is the president saying that these discoveries would never have been made if it were not for the space programme? Why not harness the ingenuity and ability of these scientists to tackle problems right here on Earth? Last week I posted about the plight of bees and the devastating impact their extinction would have on plant life. If NASA's budget over the years had been spent on safeguarding resources on Earth rather than trying to 'harness resources on distant worlds', as the President suggests, then I have no doubt that we would not be in the perilous position we are in today.

TIP: It can be helpful to make occasional references to the fact that this is a blog post.

It's time to stop star-gazing and time to ground ourselves in reality once again. When we have put all the time, energy and public funding we can into making this world a better, fairer place for all, then we may look to the skies once more. If and when that day comes, I will throw my wholehearted support behind NASA's exploration of space.

TIP: Star-gazing has a double meaning here. It can mean observing the stars but it can also mean being absorbed in an impractical idea.

It is also time for those of us who feel strongly on this topic to have our voices heard. I would urge you all to sign the online petition below and let our government know that we believe it is time to invest in our planet and our children rather than in the unknown.

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: As this is a fifteen-mark question, you should aim to write three well-developed points. In this case, the structure is straightforward as you are asked to outline three challenges issued by Bono.

Be aware that you are expected to use your own words when outlining each of the challenges. That does not mean that you cannot quote at all, but it does mean you should keep quotes to a minimum.

Sample Plan:
Decide what they want to do with all the moral and intellectual capital they have built up during their time in university
Challenge and expose the 'moral blind spots' of the age and don't be afraid to fight to change the status quo / future
Specifically, be the generation that says no to 'stupid poverty'

Sample Answer:

The first challenge Bono issues to the graduating students is to decide what they want to do with all the moral and intellectual capital they have built up during their years in university. He points out to them that a lot of time and money has been spent on getting them to this stage and now he urges them to consider seriously what their next step should be in order to make the most of the investment that has gone into making them the people they are today. He clearly wants them to do something impressive as he asks them rather provocatively, 'What's *your* big idea?'

Of course, Bono has ideas of his own as to how the students should use their education to good effect and he goes on to encourage the graduates to challenge and expose the moral defects of their era. He reminds them that some of the greatest people in history – specifically and appropriately American history in this case – have been those who have rebelled against the status quo. Bono calls on the students to follow in the footsteps of those who abolished slavery and stood up to the evils of segregation. He urges the students to look closely and honestly at their own age and to identify and fight against injustice.

TIP: Try to think of other ways in which you could say that Bono issues challenges: 'calls on', 'urges the students' etc. Your vocabulary should be rich and varied.

As his speech progresses, Bono's challenges become more specific. Having originally asked the students to consider the best way to use their talents and then encouraged them to fight their era's 'moral blind spots', he goes on to tell them that he believes that they should be members of the generation that ensures equality for the population of Africa. His rhetoric becomes quite forceful towards the end of his address as he challenges anyone to give him an argument as to why this generation should not be the one to end needless poverty and disease on that continent. Although he does say that any good fight against injustice is worthwhile, it is obvious that Bono wants the graduates to invest time, expertise and energy into changing the fate of Africa.

TIP: Where possible, link your paragraphs and show the corrector that you have planned a coherent, well-structured answer.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: While you would usually aim to write three paragraphs, it is specified here that you should make only two points.

You are asked for a personal response so it is important to look for those observations that actually did resonate with you. However, you must remember to stay focused on the text throughout.

Sample Plan:
Intrigued by notion of betraying the ages as we have been brought up to be largely compliant – sobering to realise that society can get it so wrong
Future is malleable – related to this as it gave me a sense of ownership of a future that had seemed to be mapped out for me

Sample Answer:

The first observation that Bono makes which caught my attention is in the fourth paragraph when he says that today's students should be willing to betray the age. I found this intriguing and initially quite surprising. After all, we are the generation that has been encouraged to obey rather than betray. If we want to go to third level we have to work the system and succeed in those areas that our elders have dictated for us. We are constantly told that if we want to get a job we will have to dress the right way and express the right views. For us, success means acceptance and fitting in to whatever role is required of us and believing that those in charge know best. However, Bono suggests that slavish and unquestioning adherence to the status quo puts us in the same bracket as those who accepted slavery and segregation. His examples really hit home as I felt deeply uncomfortable at the thought that our failure to identify and rectify the moral blind spots of our age may mean that the next generation will judge us as harshly as we judge those in history who did not stand up to the 'ungodly and inhuman' slave trade.

TIP: You are asked to identify the observation that made an impact on you so you must either paraphrase it and give the number of the paragraph in which it is to be found or give the quote in its entirety.

The second observation that Bono makes which struck a chord with me is when he says that the future is 'not fixed, it's fluid'. I found this a positive and encouraging idea. I really related to it as we are so focused on what seem to be unchangeable, fixed goals in our lives at the moment that it is refreshing to hear someone tell us that the future is ours and is what we make of it. The idea of hammering the future into a shape made me think of a smith or a craftsman forging something wonderful, original and beautiful out of the materials to hand. Bono gives the younger generation a sense of ownership of the future and at the same time encourages us by implying that we will use our education and skills to create a better life for ourselves and others.

TIP: Remember that you were asked for your personal response to your chosen observation so you must say how it made you feel.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Note: It would be hard to disagree with this statement, although you can do so if you choose, of course.

Focus on the words 'engaging' and 'inspiring' and make sure that you refer to both in your answer. Note also that you are asked to look at *what* Bono says (content) as well as *how* he says it (style).

Think about Bono's aim in this speech and ask yourself which of the language genres he uses. He is trying to make a case and to encourage the students to agree with him. Therefore, he is using both the language of argument and the language of persuasion. Think of the features of both of these genres and think about other speeches you have analysed over the past few years. Does Bono use techniques you have seen before and does he use them effectively?

Sample Plan:
Rhetorical questions are relevant, forceful and engaging. Inspires students by suggesting they have a 'big idea'.
Honest and interesting anecdotes disarm the audience and win them over to his side.
Powerful examples from history make his points difficult to ignore.
Gives students a sense of ownership of the future: forceful, positive language and ideas

Sample Answer:

Bono's address to the graduating students is both engaging and inspiring, ranging as it does from the disarmingly personal to the thought-provoking and sometimes shocking, yet managing to finish on a positive and encouraging note.

TIP: In a long answer like this twenty-marker, it is a good idea to outline the points you intend to make. Do not go into any detail at this stage and remember that if you mention something in an introduction you must develop it in the main body of the answer.

Bono begins his speech with honest anecdotes about his youth. Although he is standing in front of the graduating class of a prestigious university, Bono freely admits that he never went to college and that the faculty members would be well within their rights to question his presence at the graduation. He goes on to say that music 'woke me up to the world' while at the same time

TIP: Even if you know nothing about the University of Pennsylvania, it's safe to assume that any college which can get a celebrity of Bono's calibre to speak at graduation must be prestigious.

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revealing that as a young man he had a certain star-struck naivety when listening to 'The Clash' in that he took their rebellious attitude 'at face value' and did not realise that many of the rebels of the punk rock era would 'wear the boots but they wouldn't march'. I think that these frank admissions would disarm the audience and win them over to Bono's side from the start of his speech.

TIP: Remember, when you make a point, link it back to the question.

One of the most striking aspects of Bono's mode of address is his use of relevant, forceful and provocative rhetorical questions. He engages the students early in his speech by asking them to consider why they are there in the first place and, once they have absorbed this, he moves on to ask what they intend to do with their education: 'What's your big idea?' His questions demand that the students reflect carefully because he does not ask them if they have a 'big idea', but what exactly that big idea is and how worthwhile it is. The suggestion in these questions is that the audience is almost obliged to identify and address the 'moral blind spots' of our age. Bono's rhetorical questions are a call to arms and are likely to inspire the students by implying that the choices they make are important and can make a difference in the world.

TIP: The first point dealt with Bono's engagement with his audience and the second point deals with his method of inspiring them.

Once Bono has captured his audience's attention and started them thinking about their role in changing the future, he uses powerful examples from history and links them to the point he wishes to make. He cleverly chooses two issues – slavery and segregation – that would make many Americans feel uncomfortable or outraged as they reflect on these shameful aspects of their nation's history. By comparing these to the current situation in Africa, Bono raises the thought-provoking and worrying notion that if today's young people ignore the poverty and suffering on that continent, posterity will judge them just as harshly as they judge those who trafficked in human beings or wrote into law measures to discriminate against others on the basis of their skin colour.

TIP: The question asked you to comment on content as well as style. You don't have to give equal weight to both, however.

Towards the end of his address, Bono ensures that he leaves the students with a positive sense of ownership of the future and a clear goal towards which they should strive. His words are motivational and likely to encourage the students to take up his cause. The language he uses is forceful and dynamic as he urges his listeners to 'fight', 'get rough, steel your courage, have one last primal scream and go.'

I feel sure that those who were present for Bono's address that day would have been both gripped and inspired by his well-chosen words.

Text 1 – Question B (50)

Note: You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write.

Sample Plan:

It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin your Question B answer:

1. What <u>form</u> should this task take?

This is a formal letter.

2. What should the <u>content</u> be?

You must make it clear that the students are unhappy with the Principal's decision and give the reasons why you think there should be a graduation. Don't forget that you are writing on behalf of the Student Council. The views you express will not be yours alone.

3. Who is my <u>audience</u>?

Your audience is the Principal. Although you may have known him or her for years, you are not friends. Therefore, you should address him or her formally.

4. What <u>register</u> should I use?

As this is a formal letter, you should write carefully and correctly. Avoid any slang, abbreviations or contractions (shortening 'I am' to 'I'm' is an example of a contraction).

TIP: It is very unusual to write a formal letter to someone in the same building as yourself so it might be best in this case to make the sender's address your home address rather than the school's address. The most important thing is that you show the corrector you know how to lay out a formal letter.

Sample Answer:

Ard na Gréine,
Blackrock,
Co. Cork.

Ms Clodagh McCleery,
Ashtown Community College,
Co. Cork.

5th May 2015

Dear Ms McCleery,

On behalf of the Student Council, I have been asked to express the Sixth Year students' dismay and sadness at the recent announcement that there will not be any graduation ceremony for the Leaving Certificate Class of 2015.

TIP: Your opening paragraph should make it clear why you are writing this letter.

When we began as First Years in Ashtown Community College six years ago, we were welcomed with a ceremony during which you told us that beginning secondary school was an important step in our transition from children to young men and women. Three years later, at the Transition Year open night you once again told the assembled students and parents that we were marking another important step in our education and in our personal growth. Yet now, when we are about to embark on one of the most important transitions in our education and our lives, you suggest that we leave the occasion unmarked. All of us in the Class of 2015 urge you to reconsider this decision.

TIP: You must provide a number of solid reasons for reversing the decision not to hold a graduation ceremony.

The graduation ceremony is an opportunity for all of us to look back on six years of wonderful experiences in the school and to remember the great times we sha red. For example, one of the highlights of the ceremony has traditionally been the slideshow of photos submitted by students and teachers, and work has already begun on putting together the images and accompanying captions. At the last Student Council meeting we reviewed dozens of photographs of teams, school tours, plays and concerts and we greatly looked forward to seeing the final presentation on graduation night, as did all of those who took the time to find the pictures and write their recollections of each event. It is deeply disappointing to think of all of this energy and enthusiasm going to waste.

After the exams, most of us will be going our different ways. The graduation ceremony will be the last time we are together as a group to celebrate all we have achieved. Not only that, it is also a chance for us to express our appreciation to the staff for the hard work that has gone into bringing us to this point. Speeches have been prepared and practised and each student has contributed to a gift for the staffroom. I know I speak for all of our class when I say that we would be sorry not to be able to thank all the staff formally on graduation night.

Not only will the Sixth Year students be let down if there is no graduation ceremony this year but our parents will also be disappointed. They have been there with us on every step of our journey through secondary school and are proud of all we have achieved. Not everyone in the school will be going on to third level courses and for those students and their parents a sixth year graduation has an even greater significance than it does for those who continue on to further education. A number of these students have approached members of the Student Council to say how upset they and their families are at the thought that they may have no chance to celebrate the occasion in the school.

TIP: Don't forget to keep referring to the students' dissatisfaction.

The Student Council appreciates the hard work and preparation that goes into making the Sixth Year graduation such a wonderful event each year and would like to assure all the staff of our practical support in the lead-up to the night and in the clean-up the following day, if that would be of help.

TIP: Remember, the Principal has the final say in whether or not the ceremony goes ahead, so it would be sensible to be as positive and accommodating as possible. This is no time for harsh criticism or threats. Try to win the Principal over.

In light of the points we have raised, the Student Council respectfully asks that the decision not to hold a graduation ceremony is reversed and we thank you for taking the time to consider our request.

TIP: Be polite and formal from start to finish.

Yours sincerely,

Ciara Lynch

Ciara Lynch
Chairperson
Student Council

TIP: When you are writing a formal letter on behalf of an organisation, it is usual to sign off with your signature and then a printed version of your name along with your position in the organisation.

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Text 2 – Question A (i) (15)

Note: You are asked to outline challenges facing *contemporary* writers. This means those who are writing ghost literature in the modern era.

As this is a fifteen-mark question, you should aim to write three well-developed points. In this case, the structure is straightforward as you are asked to outline three challenges facing contemporary writers of ghost literature.

Be aware that you are expected to use your own words when outlining each of the challenges. That does not mean that you cannot quote at all, but it does mean you should keep quotes to a minimum.

Sample Plan:
We live in an age of reason in which people demand proof.
Short stories are no longer fashionable but it is difficult to sustain disbelief over the course of a novel.
This is an era in which people are used to extreme horror rather than less definable hauntings.

Sample Answer:

The first challenge that Joanna Briscoe discusses in this article is the fact that we live in an age of reason and therefore expect scientific and rational explanations for everything. In the Victorian era, culture was not so secular and readers were willing to accept things without proof. However, the dark, secret shadows of yesteryear have been replaced by a brightly illuminated world with CCTV cameras on every corner. There is little room for anything that is not visible 'in any straightforward way' and modern writers must therefore adapt and seek new ways of hinting at the darkness and terrors in the shadows.

Another issue that contemporary writers of ghost literature must address is the form and length of their finished work. Sustaining suspension of disbelief over the course of a novel is a difficult task, which is why short stories were the dominant form in the heyday of ghost literature. Novelists writing in this genre have to strike a delicate balance between drawing the story out and ensuring that their readers' nerves are not frayed to breaking point in the process.

TIP: Be careful not to use the term 'ghost writers' here as that is a different type of writing in which somebody authors a book which is officially attributed to another person.

Possibly the most difficult challenge for contemporary writers of this genre is competing with the 'extreme horror' to which their audience has become accustomed. Be it television shows, crime fiction or console games, gore is all too readily available at the touch of a button or the turn of a page. Writers of ghost literature have to try to frighten their readers with something far more subtle and less defined than a blood-spattered screen, which obviously requires a great deal of skill.

Text 2 – Question A (ii) (15)

Note: It would be hard to disagree with this statement, although you can do so if you choose, of course.

Focus on the words 'informative' and 'engaging' and make sure that you refer to both in your answer.

You are asked to comment on 'at least two' features of Briscoe's style but as this is a fifteen-mark question you should aim for three if possible.

Sample Plan:
Informative – deals in detail with past and present examples of the genre
Engaging – honest insight into her thought process when writing and the rationale behind her choices
Thought-provoking analysis of the nature of fear and how it is best evoked

Sample Answer:

Briscoe's article on the challenges faced by contemporary writers of ghost literature is both informative and engaging, as is to be expected from a successful author.

Briscoe goes into a great deal of detail about the differences between modern and older versions of the genre and supports her points with interesting and relevant examples. She explains that the reason for short stories being the preferred form in the heyday of ghost literature was the difficulty of sustaining suspension of disbelief over the course of a full-length novel. Briscoe even provides us with the word count of one of the most famous classics, 'The Turn of the Screw'. Later in the article she tells us that narrators in older ghost stories were unreliable and 'vastly ramped up by later psychoanalytic thinking'. I found this thorough analysis of the varying styles of writing informative and interesting.

Briscoe is equally thorough when it comes to discussing her own thought process when approaching her work and her honest assessment of the rationale behind her choices is intriguing. For example she tells us that she deliberately chooses light rather than darkness as the setting for her story as she is keen to avoid being too obvious. Her enthusiasm for her work is most engaging as we are drawn in by her passion for producing writing that taps into the darker parts of our psyche. Briscoe says she found it interesting to turn the old reliance on madness and unreliable narrators on its head by having the 'real chaos' lie somewhere unpredictable. Such insights into the mind of the author are as compelling as I have no doubt her novel would be.

TIP: 'Intriguing' is another way of saying that Briscoe's writing is engaging.

The final reason I found Briscoe's writing so gripping is her analysis of the nature of fear. She rightly points out that most of us have become immune to 'extreme horror' and blood-spattered screens and yet she still claims that we can be utterly terrified if we are allowed to use our imaginations sufficiently. Fear, as Briscoe says, lies not in what 'leaps out of the shadows' but rather in the more subtle glimpses or imagined terrors in the cracks. This is a thought-provoking observation and one which is likely to make any reader consider what it is that they find frightening and why.

Text 2 – Question A (iii) **(20)**

Note: You must be sure to link the visual and the written text. It is not enough to discuss the merits of one cover in detail: both must be analysed. While you do not necessarily have to give both equal treatment, it would make sense to devote two paragraphs to each as this is a twenty-mark question and you should aim to write four paragraphs in response.

You do not need to confine yourself to the visuals. The question requires you to discuss the covers rather than the illustrations, so you should feel free to analyse every aspect of each one.

Sample Plan:
Cover A hints at the spectral / unseen.
Extracts from reviews support the sense of the hauntingly unknown.
Cover B is rather more obvious and leaves less to the imagination.
However, Cover B does acknowledge the history of the genre in a way that Cover A does not.

Sample Answer:

I believe Cover A captures much of what Joanna Briscoe has to say about writing ghost literature. It hints at something spectral and unseen and is an excellent illustration of the unsettling atmosphere and the 'less definable hauntings' she describes. The blues and whites used might seem surprisingly light for ghost literature but Briscoe states that she prefers the less obvious approach to fear and deliberately uses brightness to evoke unease. I think that the colours create a sense of eerie tension as we wonder what it is that lurks out of sight. The figure of the girl in the oddly old-fashioned white dress is blurred, her head bowed and her straight, dark hair pulled back behind her ears. Her clothes and posture suggest a blend of innocence and sorrow and at the same time hint that she may not be quite of this world. This fits in well with Briscoe's claim that ghost stories should contain 'a blurring between reality and madness or projection'.

TIP: Remember to link all of your comments on the book covers to what Briscoe has to say about ghost literature.

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The font used for the title of the book and the quote from the *Observer* newspaper also contribute to making this cover an effective illustration of Briscoe's approach to ghost literature. The font is simple and elegant rather than – as might be expected in this genre – gothic and overtly creepy. Again, this ties in with Briscoe's stated preference for the 'less obvious' and her assertion that 'Perfection can be eerie'. The chosen comment from a reviewer focuses on the gripping, hypnotic and sensuous nature of the novel, which I feel is most appropriate as Briscoe maintains that 'Above all, ghost writing is about atmosphere'.

Cover B presents us with a different view of ghost literature to Cover A. While Cover A is for Briscoe's own novel, Cover B is for a collection of short stories and seems to hark back to earlier examples of the genre. The colours used are predictably gothic and spooky: black, grey and a sort of ghastly yellowish-green predominate.

The figures gathered around a headstone bearing the title are stereotypical ghosts but because they are so clichéd they do not have the same power to capture the imagination of modern readers that they may have had a century or so ago. Briscoe agrees with Roald Dahl who said that 'The best ghost stories don't have ghosts in them', so I feel that Cover B most certainly would not meet with her approval. Oddly, the editor of this collection is Susan Hill, who Briscoe quotes as stating that 'Less is always more' when it comes to ghost literature which is definitely not the case in Cover B. I wonder if perhaps Hill and the illustrator are deliberately playing with the stereotypes in a slightly humorous way. If so, that does not fit in with Briscoe's approach as far as I can see in that she is focused throughout on 'terrors glimpsed or imagined in the cracks'.

Text 2 – Question B (50)

Note: I would strongly advise that you do not choose this task unless you have a good knowledge of and genuine interest in one of these genres. Take careful note of the genres listed: you are not given the opportunity to write about a series such as 'Game of Thrones', for example. This is a task best suited to the avid reader. It is worth noting that one of the genre options is autobiography. Many students who might not necessarily consider themselves great readers have read sporting autobiographies and would be well able to discuss that type of writing at length.

Sample Plan:

1. What form should this task take?

This is an article for a website. It is similar to a feature article for a newspaper or a magazine.

2. What should the content be?

You are required to give at least two (you should aim for more) important characteristics of the genre you have chosen and you are also asked to give advice to young people who might wish to write in this genre.

3. Who is my audience?

Your audience is aspiring young writers. That means that you are already preaching to the converted in that they want to write and enjoy literature. You don't need to persuade them of the value of reading and you should avoid talking down to them.

4. What register should I use?

You are writing for people your own age so you can be a little more informal than you might be under other circumstances. However, remember that these are aspiring writers who would no doubt appreciate a higher level of language than other readers might. When giving advice, you should aim to be persuasive and informative. This is not a writing task suited to vagueness. If you can't think of specific examples of your genre, you should choose a different task.

Sample Answer:

We might not like to admit it about ourselves, but murder – real or imaginary – holds us in thrall in a way few other crimes do, particularly if the case is a puzzling one. This is why detective fiction is such an enduringly popular genre. Can you imagine anyone picking up a book that promised to bring to justice the perpetrator of a lesser crime, say shoplifting or racking up too many parking fines? We don't necessarily demand gore but we do demand a high-stakes mystery concerning at least one sudden, violent death. If you are considering writing this type of fiction, you should think about your audience and your own interests. Do you prefer the bodies to pile up or are you more drawn towards a single murder which will take an entire novel to solve? As a general rule, European crime fiction centres on fewer murders and a complex mystery, while American examples of the genre favour a high body-count and a less intricate plot.

One of the other interesting things about detective fiction is the way in which it mirrors society. In the early days of crime writing, it was acceptable to assume that the lower classes and foreigners were somehow suspect, even if it turned out that they had nothing to do with the murder. This led to one of the defining rules of detective novels being that servants should not be the culprits as that would be too obvious! Saying that the butler did it is the ultimate cliché when discussing murder mysteries. This right-wing view is no longer in vogue. Nowadays, as the tide of public opinion turns against those who are perceived to have grown rich at the expense of the ordinary working person, the detective is seen as a crusader for social justice as much as a crusader for criminal justice.

Stieg Larsson's incredibly popular 'The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo' series cashes in on this distaste for the establishment. His heroine is a rebel with a cause and his hero is a journalist who is strangely drawn to her. The villains are people in power who may have money but who are morally bankrupt. Should you decide that detective fiction is for you, it is worth taking a little time to consider the prevailing mood of your contemporaries. Who would they like to see brought to justice? Or, if you want to add a twist to the tale, who would they be shocked to see as the villain?

TIP: Use specific examples to support your points.

While a strong plot is important, of course, good crime fiction also needs strong, credible characters if it is to capture and hold the reader's attention. The protagonist can be quirky or difficult, but he or she must also be likeable in some way so that the reader will care about what happens to him or her. For example, Irish writer John Connolly's Charlie Parker is a troubled man in many ways and his ex-con sidekicks have colourful pasts, to say the least. However, all three are ultimately fighting the good fight and there is no doubt that the reader is squarely in their camp. Anyone planning a future in crime writing should get into the habit of keeping notes on possible characters they may use and should get to know these people inside out so that when they appear in a novel, their behaviour is consistent, their personalities believable and, hopefully, engaging.

I'll leave you with some advice that I read on another writer's website some time ago. The aptly-named Karin Slaughter, an award-winning American author of some of the goriest and most gripping crime fiction I have ever some across, said that the most important thing any writer can do is read. So remember that the next time you play armchair detective and try to figure out 'whodunnit', you are not lazing about but are engaged in valuable research. Enjoy!

Text 3 – Question A (i) (15)

Note: As this is a fifteen-mark question, you should aim to write three well-developed points. In this case, the structure is straightforward as you are asked to outline three challenges posed by old age.

Be aware that you are expected to use your own words when outlining each of the challenges. That does not mean that you cannot quote at all, but it does mean you should keep quotes to a minimum.

Sample Plan:
In a fast-paced world of technology, older people do not have skills which are valued by the young.
Stereotyping: grandparents are seen as old and feeble
Physical decline

Sample Answer:

In this extract from her memoir, Penelope Lively tells us that the elderly have to cope with the fact that they are not sufficiently tech-savvy, are victims of stereotyping and have to endure physical decline.

In this fast-paced age of technology, older people do not possess the type of skills that make them appear valuable to the younger generation. The author points out that in hunter-gatherer societies the elderly are appreciated for the knowledge they have accumulated over their lifetimes, as their experiences are relevant in a largely unchanging world. However, such societies are few and far between in the modern era and Lively wryly says it is a good thing that the wealth technology brings with it means that there is no pressure to dispose of useless older people!

TIP: While we may think of hunter-gatherer societies as being a thing of the past, they do exist in some places and Lively uses the present tense when discussing them, so you should too.

Another challenge posed by old age is persistent stereotyping. Grandparents are regarded as feeble creatures, tottering about with the aid of a stick and confining themselves to 'pottering in the garden' or knitting. Lively encountered just such an attitude when judging a children's writing competition even though, as she points out, those children's grandparents would have been around sixty and probably still in employment. Those who engage in

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such stereotyping not only ignore the facts but also assume all old people are alike which is something Lively resents. She says that people are 'splendidly various', regardless of age.

Despite the variety in their personalities and abilities, Lively does acknowledge that old people have one thing in common, and that is physical deterioration. She lists a number of illnesses and diseases that she says are 'par for the course' for an elderly person and admits that she would like to have the strength and health of youth again.

Text 3 – Question A (ii) (15)

Note: While you would usually aim to write three paragraphs, it is specified here that you should make only two points.

Read the question carefully. You are not asked to talk about ageing but about youth and/or young people.

You are asked for a personal response so it is important to look for those observations that actually did resonate with you. However, you must remember to stay focused on the text throughout.

Sample Plan:
Pressure on young people – constantly sizing one another up
Youth is exciting but exhausting – comes with its own traumas

Sample Answer:

Although Penelope Lively's piece is mainly concerned with ageing, she makes two observations about youth and young people which I found interesting and thought-provoking.

In the third paragraph, Lively claims to prefer the anonymity that comes with age to the pressure that is part and parcel of youth. She says that while she may walk down the street and be almost invisible, young people are busy 'sizing up one another'. I feel that this is an accurate depiction of the way in which people of my age behave. Yes, we do size others up, partly to judge them but more often to judge ourselves when compared with them. Some of us worry that our clothes, our hair or our general appearance are neither fashionable nor attractive enough, while others are at pains to make fashion statements that say, 'I don't care; I wear what I want'. However, both groups do care enough to cast furtive glances at those around them to see if they are creating the right impression. Few people my age are as confident as they might appear and most want to fit in. As I read this extract, I almost envied Penelope Lively's feeling of 'comfortable anonymity' as she strolls about, unnoticed and free to do as she pleases.

TIP: Describing your feelings is important when giving a personal response.

Another astute observation that the author makes about youth is that, while it is a time of 'vigour and robust health', it is also 'no picnic'. She does not envy us the stress, disappointments and other traumas that we must invariably experience. I know exactly what she means here as I frequently find myself raging inwardly at those older people who constantly remind me that these are the 'best years' of my life as I study night and day to get to college so I can study night and day so I can get a job and work night and day… That is, of course, assuming that I get enough points to get to third level and that I somehow manage to secure a job after that. The stresses of youth are not confined to education and work, of course. Even love, which Lively recognises as something without which life would be incomplete, is, as she says, a 'consuming' and 'tormenting' thing when you are young.

TIP: It is important to keep your answer grounded in the extract. Remember, you are asked to support your points with evidence from the text.

All in all, Penelope Lively seems to have a good insight into what it is to be young, yet while she raises some of the more negative aspects of our time of life, at the end of the day I would not swap with her any more than she would swap with me!

Text 3 – Question A (iii) (20)

Note: As always, it is easier to agree with a positive statement about a piece that has been chosen for inclusion in a Leaving Certificate examination. Penelope Lively is an award-winning novelist so it is highly likely that her writing will be skilful and her observations perceptive.

Focus on the words 'skilfully written' and 'perceptively observed' and make sure that you refer to both in your answer. Note also that you are asked to look at *what* Penelope Lively says (content) as well as *how* she says it (style).

Sample Plan:

Moves from observation to reflection and blends intimacy with more complex ideas

Self-deprecating humour makes her writing appealing

Sees herself like an 'observant time-traveller' – her detachment allows her to take a balanced approach

Sample Answer:

I agree that this extract from Penelope Lively's memoir is both skilfully written and perceptively observed.

One of the main reasons I found this piece such an enjoyable read is because Lively blends easy, intimate, conversational narrative with profound and thought-provoking insights into the human condition. When she is discussing her physical decline, Lively chattily shares details such as the fact that her eyesight is 'dodgy' and that she has had to endure a number of other ailments. She then moves on to consider whether or not such signs of age alter a person's 'essential persona', coming to the conclusion that it does not and that an older person is an accumulation of all the various stages of their development. She notes that although their style may change, the early work of poets such as Wordsworth and Tennyson shows that they are 'not essentially adrift from their later selves'. By moving from the personal to the universal in this way, Lively allows us to gradually absorb ideas that might otherwise have appeared offputtingly complex.

TIP: 'Accumulation' is a synonym of 'accretion'. Using your own words rather than quoting all the time shows the corrector that you understand the passage.

Another aspect of Lively's writing style that I admire is her clever use of self-deprecating humour to bring to life a topic – ageing – which does not seem initially attractive or interesting. For example, Lively shares an amusing anecdote in which she says that she was subjected to a mobile phone salesman's disdain when he realised that he was actually selling to an 'old granny' rather than the writer's granddaughter. Similarly, Lively freely admits that she and her ilk are 'not especially interesting ' and are thus almost invisible when they are out and about. Lively does not mind in the slightest and her good-natured attitude towards the subject of old age engages her reader more than railing against the unfairness of it all could ever do.

In the third paragraph, Lively describes herself as being like an 'observant time-traveller, on the edge of things, bearing witness to the customs of another age', and I feel that it is this slight detachment from her situation that enables the author to perceptively observe the world around her and to take a balanced approach to the question of youth versus old age. She muses on aspects of youth such as health, vigour and falling in love and is able to view them dispassionately, concluding that while she would like to be physically stronger, she is well aware that there are negative aspects to youth such as the 'consuming, tormenting form' of love and the other traumas that are part and parcel of growing up. Lively's novelist's eye and her composure as she reflects on her situation means that she is in a perfect position to see each stage of life for what it is and to sum up by saying that she doesn't 'remember being any more appreciative of life' than she is now.

Text 3 – Question B **(50)**

Sample Plan:

1. What <u>form</u> should this task take?
This is an introduction to a book, so the form is quite relaxed. All you need to do is share your opinions with the readers. Remember, they have probably bought the book already if they are reading the introduction.

2. What should the <u>content</u> be?
You must discuss:
(a) the importance of older people in the lives of young people and
(b) the contributions older people make to society in general.

3. Who is my <u>audience</u>?
Your audience is anyone of any age who might choose to read the book.

4. What <u>register</u> should I use?
You need to be persuasive – you want readers to enjoy the book and see the value of it.

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Sample Answer:

In 'Sailing to Byzantium', W. B. Yeats claims that Ireland is 'no country for old men'. Although he wrote this poem almost one hundred years ago, Yeats' sentiments could be expressed with equal validity today. We do not appreciate older members of our society as much as we should and by failing to recognise their wisdom and their worth we deny both them and ourselves much joy and much knowledge.

TIP: W. B. Yeats' 'Sailing to Byzantium' was on the poetry course for 2015 and many students would have studied this poem. If you have not, maybe you could think of an apposite quotation from another poet you have studied. Many poets are concerned with old age, after all!

This book goes some way towards rectifying the situation. In it we see the affection and respect the contributors have for their older family members. I was particularly touched by Donal Murphy's funny and warm poem 'Hooked' (page 34) in which he describes his first fishing trip with his grandfather. Donal perfectly captures the varied emotions of a youngster on such an occasion: initial reluctance but mannerly acquiescence followed by a dawning realisation that his grandfather possesses skills, experience and patience that the young man finds himself envious of as he wrestles with his first catch. Similarly, we have Aisling McCarthy's charming and funny short story 'Driving Me Crazy' about her driving lessons with her grandmother (page 21) in which she recounts the older woman's endless patience and her amusing recollections of Aisling's father's similarly slow and torturous path to a full driving licence. In both the examples I have mentioned, greater understanding led to a stronger bond as the young people realised that their grandparents have so much to offer and are sufficiently experienced to remain calm in situations when hard-pressed parents may lose their cool!

TIP: You should try, wherever possible, to show the corrector that you understand the form of the Question B you have chosen to answer. Here, I refer to fictional sections in the book to add realism to the introduction.

It is not just in family situations that older people are assets to society. Over a quarter of retirees engage in voluntary work in their community and, in an age of government cutbacks, such aid is invaluable. Those who help out do so in libraries, homeless shelters, sports clubs, churches and many other places. One contributor to this book tells of her local Venture Scout group which faced closure until a number of elderly, former Scouts came to the rescue and went to the trouble of re-registering as leaders in order to keep the troop alive. Now they are one of the most active sections in the country and have enabled members of the troop to achieve a record number of Chief Scout awards.

What struck me most forcibly as I read the poems, articles and stories in this book was that in almost every case there was a sense of surprise that the elderly could have so much to offer. It's astonishing, when you think about it, that we should be so short-sighted as to ignore the wealth of experience of those who have lived long and fruitful lives. It is an indictment of our fast-paced world with our over-reliance on technology that we see older people's knowledge and views as out-dated and do not stop to consider that there is more to life than an ability to use a computer. Hopefully those of us who have read this book will be motivated to a greater appreciation of the older members of our society and will begin to make this country a place that even the elderly Yeats would view positively. Let us not forget after all that ageing is inevitable and in years to come we will be the ones to reap the rewards of the attitudes we shape today!

TIP: If you can, it is a nice touch to wrap up your piece by referring back to what you said in your introduction. Only do this if it seems natural; don't force it.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: You must be sure to discuss both the written text and the book cover, although you do not need to give equal treatment to both. It's up to you whether you devote a separate paragraph or paragraphs to the book cover, or combine references to the written and visual texts in each paragraph.

Sample Plan:
Unflattering description of an unchanging landscape – mirrored by narrator's mood Repetition reinforces idea of dull landscape

Sample Answer:

From reading the text and studying the book cover, the impression I get of the landscape in which the extract is set is that it is featureless, dull and depressing.

The narrator, Dell, describes the countryside through which he is being driven in rather unflattering terms. Although they travel a great distance, the view seems to be always the same: 'dry unchanging cropland – a sea of golden wheat melting up into the hot unblemished blue sky'. Dell also makes it clear that this is not an attractive landscape by referring to the effect it has on him. His mood reflects what he sees and he says that he feels 'barren and isolated' as he is driven further north through this featureless land. The only town they encounter looks 'low and dismal and bleak in the baking sunlight' as they drive away. In fact, not a single positive adjective is used in this portrayal of the land Dell and Mildred Remlinger traverse.

The unchanging nature of the landscape is reflected in the repetition in Ford's description. The 'hot yellow wheat' and 'high blue sky' in the fourth paragraph become 'a sea of golden wheat melting up into the hot unblemished blue sky' in the eighth paragraph. The monotony of the landscape is further emphasised by the fact that the two main colours, yellow and blue, dominate the descriptive passages. Wheat, sun, distant hills and sky are all the boy really seems to see.

The book cover adds to the impression that the landscape in which the extract is set is dull and featureless. The top two thirds of the picture are taken up with the 'high blue sky' and the land below is dry and dusty yellow scrubland, with a road running from the left-hand bottom corner into the hills far on the horizon. There are no signs of habitation and not a single living thing to be seen. The way in which the author's name and the name of the novel are presented adds to the bleakness of this picture. They are simply and starkly set in plain font at the top right-hand corner of the picture, allowing the big sky and the straight road stretching into a pinprick in the distance, to be the main focus of the cover.

TIP: You can refer to the book cover in tandem with your analysis of the written text or you can give it a paragraph or paragraphs of its own. The choice is yours.

Both the written and visual text work in harmony to create the impression of a bleak and depressing landscape.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: As a general rule, it is a good idea to be positive about the text if possible. Of course, you may not enjoy the writer's style, but in that case you should probably consider choosing one of the other texts on the paper.

Read the question carefully: you are asked to focus on the first two paragraphs only.

Sample Plan:
Tantalising, teasing opening lines. Second paragraph raises questions but does not answer them. Ellipses add to sense that there is more to come. Low-key, matter of fact, calm, measured tone. Makes facts even stranger.

Sample Answer:

I believe the opening of Richard Ford's novel is a most effective one. It draws the reader in from the start through its startling content and unusual style.

The first two sentences in the novel are tantalising and startling: we learn initially of a robbery committed by the narrator's parents and then, even more shockingly, about 'the murders'. The impact of these events on the narrator's life is clear when he says that they set both his life and his sister's 'on the courses they eventually followed'. Ford teases

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us in this opening paragraph by hinting of what is to come while giving us virtually no detail. We do not know who committed 'the murders' or who was murdered. Were the murders a result of the bank robbery? Were the parents murdered? We are compelled to read on and unravel these mysteries.

The second paragraph raises yet more questions and is therefore equally as intriguing as the first. We learn that the narrator's parents were unlikely bank robbers and we wonder what could have happened to steer their lives down the path they eventually took. The ellipsis at the end of the final sentence in this paragraph hints that this is an unfinished thought and indicates that we will have to read on if we wish to learn more about the parents and their astonishing transformation from 'regular' people into bank robbers. By the time I read this far, my curiosity was certainly aroused.

Ford's language is another reason that I find this opening so interesting and engaging. Another author might have chosen to take a more dramatic approach to what appears to be a most dramatic plot line, but Ford's writing here is low-key and calm. He is clearly going to take his time to tell this story and avoids rushing headlong into the excitement of the bank robbery or the murders. Instead, he lays matters before us quite logically, in a measured way: 'First I'll tell…', 'Then about the murders…'. This understated, matter-of-fact language is not what I would have expected when introducing such shocking, life-changing events in the narrator's life, but such a blend of the ordinary and the extraordinary provides a compelling narrative hook and is a large part of the reason I find these opening paragraphs so effective. By the time I had read them, I felt that this novel was going to be anything but predictable and would probably be thought-provoking and memorable.

TIP: You would be expected to discuss style as well as content when answering this question.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Note: When you are approaching a question like this, think of the detailed way in which you study language when analysing an unseen poem. Look for many of the same features of style here, particularly in terms of the 'lyrical beauty' of the piece.

Sample Plan:

Engaging narrative: Confides in us as if to a friend; interesting, credible character in Mildred Remlinger.
Realism evident in the amount of detail provided, sense of place, all aspects of Mildred described.
Lyrical beauty: alliteration and metaphor – 'black road', etc.

Sample Answer:

I think that Ford's writing is characterised primarily by its engaging narrative and concrete realism and, to a lesser but nonetheless noticeable extent, by its lyrical beauty.

The aspect of Ford's narrative which appeals to me the most is the way in which he confides in us, the reader, as if he were speaking to a friend. Mildred's arrival at Dell's house and her announcement that she was going to remove him from the reaches of the 'Juvenile officials representing the state of Montana' is presented to us in a conversational way.

There is little effort to embellish and rather than attempting to make the narrative highly dramatic, Ford merely says, 'Mildred said we didn't have time' to look for Dell's sister and drives Dell away immediately. The indirect speech in the third paragraph makes this account more credible than if the author had chosen to use dialogue and more dynamic verbs. However, the facts of the case – Dell is going on the run – are exciting enough in their own right and I believe Ford's decision to allow them to speak for themselves makes the narrative most engaging.

The credibility of the story is enhanced by Ford's use of concrete realism. His use of place names combined with precise descriptions of the country through which he and Mildred are travelling is highly effective in creating a sense of place: 'From Havre, we drove north, across a wooden railroad viaduct over the tracks and the muddy river and along a narrow highway that angled up the rimrock grade…'. Although the descriptions are exact, they are offered to us without comment, as is the author's equally detailed word portrait of Mildred Remlinger with her 'short black curly hair, snapping small dark eyes, red lipstick, a fleshy neck and powder on her face that masked a bad complexion, though not very well.' This description, though far from flattering, is realistic and believable and succeeds in bringing Mildred to life for us.

Despite the gritty realism of Ford's writing, there are moments of lyrical beauty. Although bleak, there is also a strange beauty in the barren landscape through which he is travelling and his sensual language is evident in

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descriptions such as 'a sea of golden wheat melting up into the hot unblemished blue sky'. The less attractive aspects of the landscape are presented to us in a way that mirrors and reinforces Dell's mental state. The town of Havre is 'low and dismal and bleak in the baking sunlight'. The picture may not be an appealing one but it expresses the writer's words in an imaginative way. Similarly, the metaphor of the 'black road' which 'seemed to be my life shooting away from me with terrible speed,' is a memorable and haunting one.

TIP: Never introduce a new point in your conclusion, even if you think of a great one. A conclusion should be a brief summation of the main points of your argument.

In conclusion, then, while I find Ford's realism and engaging narrative the most compelling aspects of his writing, there is, at the same time, a certain lyrical beauty to be seen throughout the extract.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION B **(50)**

Note: You don't have the time or the space to ramble on, so make sure your points are organised before you write.

Sample Plan:

It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin your Question B answer:

1. What form should this task take?

This is a news report for a radio station. Below are a few tips for writing such a report:

a) Keep your report relevant, focused and concise.

b) Give the main points at the start of the report and elaborate on them as you continue.

c) Do not repeat information.

d) Do not give very detailed information as this will quickly cause the listener to disengage. For example, instead of saying 'The couple stole $556,000', say 'The couple stole over half a million dollars'.

e) Sentences should be short enough that a newsreader could, ideally, read each one in a single breath. Longer sentences should be clearly punctuated so the newsreader can easily make sense of them.

f) Give pronunciation guides to difficult words if necessary.

2. What should the content be?

The question tells you that there should be three main areas covered in this report:

a) The facts of the case (based on the text)

b) Some speculation as to where Dell might be

c) Some additional material of your own in which you can use your imagination

Remember that you are required to focus on Dell's story, not on the bank robbery itself. The text tells us very little about that.

3. Who is my audience?

Your audience is the general public.

4. What register should I use?

Keep your language reasonably simple as it should be easily understood by everyone. The radio station is a national one, so a certain degree of formality would be expected.

Sample Answer:

'Tonight's lead story on Nationwide News: The teenage son of notorious bank robbers vanishes in mysterious circumstances.

Police have tonight issued a nationwide alert in their search for a missing 15-year-old boy. Dell Parsons of Great Falls, Montana is the son of Bev and Neeva Parsons, the couple arrested on Tuesday in connection with the robbery of the First Mutual Bank.

Police have appealed for help in tracing a friend of the Parsons, Mildred Remlinger, who visited Bev Parsons in prison but has not been seen since. It is feared that, acting on a request from Mrs Parsons, Ms Remlinger may have removed Dell from the family home sometime this morning. Ms Remlinger's car was seen in the vicinity of the Parsons' home shortly after 9.30. Ms Remlinger is a Canadian national and police have expressed concern that she may attempt to take Dell out of US jurisdiction. They have asked all drivers heading north on Highway 87 to report any sightings of a brown Ford with a Montana licence number 20 32 87.

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Dell and his twin sister, Berner, were left home alone when their parents were taken into custody. It is not clear why authorities waited three days before attempting to take the children into care. Local church and school leaders in Great Falls have heavily criticised this delay, saying that it has put the youngsters at risk. Great Falls High School principal, Jerry Brand, said today in a statement that the Parsons twins are well-behaved students with an excellent attendance record. He expressed his shock on hearing news of the Parsons' arrest and said he hopes the twins will be found safe and well.

Our reporter, Mike Vern, visited the Parsons' street today and spoke to neighbours. There was a sense of disbelief that such a quiet, normal couple could have committed such a crime and left two teenagers to fend for themselves as a result. Nobody was willing to be interviewed on air, but several neighbours said they regretted not checking in on the children upon hearing of their parents' arrest. One woman, on condition of anonymity, revealed that she saw Berner leave the family home yesterday afternoon. The neighbour spoke to Berner briefly and the girl said she was going to stay with her cousins in New York. A police spokesman this afternoon confirmed that they are in touch with authorities in New York to check whether Berner is in fact in the care of family members.

Meanwhile, police have issued a description of Dell Parsons. He is described as five foot seven, with dark brown hair and a slim build. When last seen he was wearing blue jeans, a white and red check shirt and red sneakers. Anyone with any information is asked to contact Great Falls police on 555-4293368.'

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: Read the question carefully. You are only asked to outline what one of the men has to say about his chosen art form.

As this is a fifteen mark question, you should aim to make three well-developed points in your answer. This answer is based on John Lanchester's comments and as they are neatly divided into three paragraphs and a brief conclusion, it makes sense to base your three paragraphs on his.

Sample Plan:
Newness of video games is exciting and appealing.
They allow the player to take control and thus help him or her to engage with the story.
Both novels and video games take you into a world created by others.

Sample Answer:

John Lanchester explores the world of video games and finds himself intrigued by their newness, the way in which they empower the player, and the link between them and the novel.

TIP: A brief introduction outlining the points which will be developed in the rest of the answer is a good way to begin your answer.

Lanchester believes that what is fascinating and exciting about video games is how new they are. He says that, although they 'do story and spectacle', they are very different to television or cinema. Unlike those mediums, video games do not move through the story in a purely linear fashion, but instead force the player to experiment with increasing levels of difficulty in order to progress to the next stage. This may involve frustration and repetition, but this is 'part of the form' and a large part of what makes video games so original and interesting.

The most novel aspect of video games, in Lanchester's opinion, is that they allow the player a certain amount of control over the story and the world of the game. This serves to make the player feel deeply engaged with the medium and to allow them a level of intimacy with the world of the character that can only be rivalled by the experience provided by a novel.

TIP: The question requires you to summarise and rephrase Lanchester's points, so keep quotation to a minimum in this answer.

Lanchester goes on to discuss the connection between video games and the novel. Both share the ability to bring you into a world which has been created by someone else, while providing a certain degree of autonomy by giving you the freedom to interpret that world. Lanchester believes that there is a difference between the two forms, as the novel gives a greater insight than the video game into the character's mind; however, video games offer a 'genuinely new' perspective on the world of the story, as they empower the player to make choices which affect the outcome.

Lanchester's points are thought-provoking and interesting and shed a new light on the medium of video games. He concludes with the intriguing notion of a future hybrid form incorporating the features of both novels and video games. Like him, I would be thrilled to see this 'beautiful mutant.'

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (ii) **(15)**

Note: As you are only asked to identify two observations from the text, you can limit your answer to two paragraphs if you wish. Remember to include your personal response to each of your chosen observations.

Sample Plan:
Warner: importance of being true to your own culture rather than trying to impress Lanchester: link between novels and video games

Sample Answer:

Both Alan Warner and John Lanchester opened my eyes to aspects of their chosen art-forms which I had not previously considered and I consequently found both writers' observations thought-provoking.

Alan Warner's reflection on the importance of being true to your own culture rather than assuming that only highbrow art forms can be improving and worthwhile is refreshing and honest. He says that in his desire to become a 'refined writer', he went through a phase of forcing himself to give up the popular music he enjoyed and listened instead to classical music. Eventually he realised that he was not being true to himself by doing so and was in fact censoring the 'real world', thus risking his ability to create authentic characters in his writing. He embraced his roots once more by returning to heavy metal, which was 'the real folk music' of the town in which he grew up. What I found rather sobering about this observation was the knowledge that we are all too often told that one type of music is somehow 'worthier' than another, which is patently untrue. Warner made me see that popular music is as valid as any more highly-regarded form, such as orchestral, because it is part of our 'emotional heritage'. Such songs and sounds are inextricably linked to different stages in our lives and it is pointless to try to pretend that is not the case.

Lanchester also provided me with an insight into the art form he chose to discuss: video games. I had never thought to compare them to novels or to regard them as rivals to that medium. Indeed, I was guilty of doing what Warner alerted me to in his observation about cultural snobbery: I thought video games a very poor second to the written word. Certainly, I enjoyed them, but always felt that they were rather a of a waste of time. Lanchester's excitement about them and their ability to allow the player to 'genuinely affect the story' made me see that video games have something to offer the player: they engage you and avoid the passivity inherent in, say, watching a television programme. Video games demand your participation and involvement with the characters and the world of the story. In other words, both novels and video games make you work but also reward you with a powerful and intimate experience.

Having read both writers' observations on their chosen art-forms, I feel that I am more open-minded and more appreciative of the value of popular music and video games.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Note: You are free to say that you found both writers equally effective in conveying their point of view, or you may prefer one over the other. The important thing is to compare both of them in your answer.

Sample Plan:
Prefer Lanchester's style. Warner lacks structure. Chatty tone can ramble at times. Lanchester refers to common frame of reference while Warner focuses on his own life. Lanchester's writing is more memorable because it is more dramatic than Warner's conversational and personal approach.

Sample Answer:

While I enjoyed both Alan Warner and John Lanchester's pieces, I found that Lanchester's style was more effective in conveying his point of view.

The most striking aspect of Lanchester's writing is how well structured it is. He begins by saying that video games are exciting because of their newness, goes on to explain that originality is also important for novelists and

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methodically examines what it is that makes video games unique. He also explores the crossover that exists between the two art forms at present, before ending with the speculation that there may be a 'hybridisation' between them in the future.

Warner, on the other hand, leaps from point to point without any real sense of logical progression. His piece is more like an informal conversation than a clearly laid-out argument. When he is discussing the reference to music in his novel, Morvern Callar, he begins by saying that he loves 'all music' and follows this by claiming that he would 'only reference music if it served some narrative function.' He then gives the example of a character's listing of song titles being necessary because it shows how methodical she is. He concludes by saying that this anecdote shows how he is willing to reference music he does not enjoy if it 'fits the narrative requirements'. I was left wondering exactly why he felt it necessary to tell us that he loves 'all types of music' and then give an example of using music he does not 'necessarily enjoy'. Ironically, his writing seems to lack the method he is careful to give his character.

Another reason I preferred Lanchester's approach to Warner's is that Lanchester uses general and therefore relatable examples to support his points, while Warner asks that we examine his personal history and draw conclusions from that. While Warner talks about his 'daft' teenage phase and his childhood in Scotland, Lanchester compares and contrasts the appeal of video games and media such as television and cinema. I found that Warner's long and somewhat rambling anecdotes distracted me from the points he was trying to make rather than clarifying them, and thus his writing compared unfavourably to Lanchester's less personal, but more focused, approach.

TIP: You can give each writer a separate paragraph when comparing them or you can employ some of the techniques you learned when preparing your Comparative Study answers. Both approaches are equally valid.

Finally, I felt that Lanchester's writing was more dramatic and memorable than Warner's. Warner's relaxed style and conversational tone is, I feel, more suited to a personal narrative than a discursive piece such as this. Lanchester's opening is far more emphatic than Warner's. While Warner begins by musing over the difficulties of calibrating the influence of pop music on his writing, Lanchester leaps in with the definitive 'What's exciting and interesting about video games is their newness.' Lanchester comes to the table with fully-formed opinions, while Warner seems to be thrashing out the concepts in his mind as he writes. The final paragraph of both pieces reinforces my point. Warner ends with a rather vague link between punk rock and 'great writers coming to me on my own terms alone'. I struggle to understand what he means by this. For a man who earlier gave detailed descriptions of a character in his novel and his upbringing in a small Scottish town, Warner seems very light on specifics here. Lanchester, on the other hand, concludes his comparison of video games and literature with a fascinating idea of a future 'hybridisation' of the two forms and a striking allusion to Yeats' 'The Second Coming' when he talks of a 'new beast, slouching towards us'. Lanchester's excitement, focus and conviction are clear throughout his piece and thus he makes his case far more effectively and convincingly than does Warner.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION B (50)

Sample Plan:

1. What **form** should this task take?

This is a short talk.

2. What should the **content** be?

You should consider the following:

Positive influences on young people's lives and how they respond to them.

Negative influences on young people's lives and how they respond to them.

3. Who is my **audience**?

Your audience is your classmates.

4. What **register** should I use?

Because your audience is your classmates, the temptation could be to make the talk informal to the point of using a great deal of slang and pop-culture references. However, it is important to remember that the examiner is also your audience, so you should strive to impress him or her.

The examiner will be looking for and rewarding rhetorical devices in your answer.

Sample Answer:

Hello everyone and welcome to our weekly 'Point of View' talk. Today I am going to examine some of the influences – positive and negative – that affect us all.

Before I offer any opinion, can I have a show of hands of those who took part in the Ice Bucket Challenge? Don't worry, there's no punishment – nor is there a prize – for those who did or did not participate. I see that there are a fair few hands in the air. Thanks. You can put your hands down now. I'm not going to go that one step further and ask how many of those who raised their hands actually donated money as a result. Statistics released this week show that only half of those who had themselves videoed pouring cold water over their heads gave any money at all to charity. Those who did contribute gave, on average, two euro. That seems very little, when you consider how much time and energy went into setting up some of the elaborate videos we've all seen.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not for one moment suggesting that money raised for a charity is anything other than a good thing. However, I do question the long-term effect of such flash-in-the-pan fundraising. Can we honestly say that awareness has been raised for the charity in question? Yes, it is the talk of the moment and almost everyone is eager to jump on the bandwagon, but is this really because they care about the cause or is it donor-based philanthropy? If the participants received no 'likes' on Facebook or were not applauded on Twitter, would they have been as willing to get involved? Will those who contributed to the cause continue to do so? If not, then there is no real raising of 'awareness' as a result of this latest internet craze. Unfortunately, it will probably go the way of neknomination, no make-up selfies and all of the other fly-by-night sensations.

This example shows just how easily we are influenced by anything that goes viral on the internet and how we respond unthinkingly to these stimuli. The Ice Bucket Challenge positively encourages reaction rather than action. 'You have twenty-four hours to respond…' Most people who are nominated have, realistically, only a few hours between seeing the video nominating them and responding in kind. With the best will in the world, they do not have time to stop and think about whether or not they wish to participate.

That is the problem our generation faces. We are constantly bombarded with information, stimuli and challenges. Stopping to think about a response is scorned. Apps such as Snapchat are designed around the idea of instant response. Their ad claims that you will view the photo, laugh and then have the picture disappear in an instant. No thought required there, then. Is this what we want for ourselves? Do we want to live in an age where pausing for thought is enough to leave you out of the loop? I fear this is the case. The downside of everyone being instantly available online is that any sort of measured response is discouraged. Those you message or those who see your posts, tweets and photos are under pressure to reply quickly and they almost invariably resort to safe, meaningless comments. Your grads photos are 'too cute'. Your pet is 'soooo cute'. Everything you do is 'awesome'. Platitudes abound, egos are stroked and no new ideas are forthcoming.

However, there is hope. Social media may be shallow, but human interaction can counter it. Much as we may hate to admit it, we are surrounded by positive influences. The most significant of these is undoubtedly our parents. Their influence is not as immediately attractive and appealing as the constant, instant validation of the internet, but it is generally more worthwhile and selflessly offered, whatever we may think.

All too often, we respond negatively to adult influences in our lives, but if we take a moment to reflect, we can see that those who are attempting to advise us have far more experience of life than we do and might actually know what they are talking about. It's strange, really, that it is only in the sphere of our personal lives that we tend to reject the influence of those who have been there before us. Should we take up an adventure sport, we would be highly unlikely to scorn experienced practitioners. It's hard to imagine any one of us deciding to try deep-sea diving, for example, and interrupting the instructor in order to point out that it is our life, we'll dive the way we want and he or she does not know what they are talking about. Such an approach seems laughable but it is what many of us – myself included if I'm honest – do on a weekly if not daily basis, when offered advice or guidance by our parents.

In conclusion, then, I think it might be time for us to pause and reflect on who or what is influencing us. Are we happy to be swept along with whatever is happening online at any given moment, or do we want to make our own decisions based on sound advice from those who have our best interests at heart and have spent many years forming their opinions? The latter is not as instantly attractive nor as palatable as the former, but I believe that it is the better option and will lead us down a more worthwhile path than blindly following the herd.

Thanks for listening and I hope I have given you some food for thought.

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TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: Stick to the passage here and do not give your own opinion. You are being tested on your understanding of Heaney's ideas and your ability to summarise and paraphrase them.

Sample Plan:
Fuel our imagination, allow us to live 'more richly and connnectedly'
Possess a kind of moral force and forge greater human solidarity
Sensitivity to the past is 'life-enhancing and civilising'

Sample Answer:

Heaney argues that objects from the past are important in that they keep us in touch with our memories and link us to those who have gone before. He gives the example of an inherited piece of furniture which can be seen as a repository for the spirits of those who owned it in the past. If we are attentive to this history, then we can become emotionally connected with those people and the world in which they lived. This, Heaney says, fuels our imagination and thus allows us to live richer, happier lives.

Secondly, Heaney says that objects which have been used by others have a sort of moral force. He quotes the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, who says that if we stop to consider the history of ordinary, everyday objects such as barrels and coal sacks, we will feel a sort of solidarity with and obligation to those who have worked to fill them. Acknowledging this shared humanity is a way of giving a voice to generations who may have been silenced.

TIP: The question asked you to use your own words, so keep quotations to a minimum in your answer.

Finally, Heaney also says that being sensitive to the past is part of what makes us civilised. He sees it as a gift and says it enriches our lives in much the same way that love does. Heaney claims that staying connected with the past is essential, and goes so far as to label it 'a primary law of our nature'.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: The question asks you to respond to any observations that made an impact on you, but it does not say that the impact has to be a positive one. You can agree or disagree with Heaney's points.

As you are only asked to identify two observations from the text, you can limit your answer to two paragraphs if you wish. Remember to include your personal response to each of your chosen observations.

Sample Plan:
Fascinating to think that even seemingly valueless things are significant / important.
Important to stop and acknowledge the past and not simply forge ahead unthinkingly to keep up with technology, etc.

Sample Answer:

I found the idea that objects from the past have 'dormant energies' a fascinating one, particularly as Heaney uses the example of rusty old nails and other seemingly worthless pieces of rubbish. While I could certainly see that antique furniture would have a history worth contemplating, I had never thought of giving equal consideration to dusty, useless scraps of newspaper or old lumps of putty. However, Heaney made me realise that even these items had a purpose once and have their own stories to tell. It made me think about the bits and pieces that have accumulated in my desk drawer at home, for example. Pens without ink, empty envelopes, bus tickets… All of those had a value and a purpose once and it is intriguing to think that, in them, the past is alive, as Heaney says it was in the objects on top of his family's dresser. At the very least it gives me a good excuse not to tidy out my desk!

While I was intrigued by the notion of apparently worthless objects 'living a kind of afterlife', the observation that made the greatest impact on me was that sensitivity to the past is a hugely important part of being human. We live in an age in which the highest value is placed on newness, progress and innovation; we must have the latest and greatest pieces of technology and we must work hard to ensure a prosperous and successful future for ourselves. Little emphasis is put on remaining connected to the past, particularly our personal past. Yet Heaney says that a sense

of the past is a civilising and life-enhancing influence and that it is a fundamental part of our humanity. The more I thought about this, the truer it appeared. After all, we are a product of all the generations who went before and we each have a rich family history. Having read Heaney's views on the matter, I see the potential the past has to enhance our sense of belonging and the way in which embracing it can allow us to live 'more richly and connectedly' in our own lives.

TIP: Don't forget to give your personal response to your chosen observations.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Note: As this is a twenty mark question, you should aim to write four well-developed points. You can agree or disagree with the statement, but you must discuss Heaney's style in some detail.

Sample Plan:
Literary quotations help to develop and support his ideas
Anecdotes / reminiscences
Familiar images
Figurative language

Sample Answer:

I agree that Heaney makes complex and profound ideas accessible to the general reader because of his effective use of supporting material, familiar, domestic imagery and figurative language.

One of the most interesting and effective ways in which Heaney does this is by using a number of literary quotations to support his points. In the hands of another writer, references to Hardy, Neruda and Wordsworth may make the essay off-putting to the average reader, but Heaney does not presuppose any familiarity with these other poets. He gives us the full text of Hardy's 'The Garden Seat', rather than simply assuming we know it and does the same for the passage by Pablo Neruda. I found Hardy's charming poem and Heaney's explanation of it as being about 'the ghost-life that hovers over the furniture of our lives' worked well together to convey the idea of objects becoming 'temples of the spirit'.

Another feature of Heaney's writing which makes his philosophical ideas easy to understand is the way he roots them in personal experiences from his childhood. The anecdote in which he describes climbing on top of the family dresser and examining the rubbish that had accumulated there is one to which we can easily relate. We are led seamlessly from the straightforward simile comparing the dresser to a 'time machine' to the more complex conclusion that the items stored there possessed 'dormant energies'.

It is not just the anecdotes themselves which make Heaney's writing so accessible for the general reader: his language when he reminisces also serves to make his writing engaging. When he talks about the old pistol hanging in his kitchen, Heaney effectively conjures up an image of a typical Irish kitchen of that era. He describes the 'ordinary world of dressers, churns, buckets, statues and Sacred Heart lamps' in a no-nonsense but at the same time highly evocative way. The domestic imagery in his anecdotes is blended with scholarly ideas such as the 'sense of history' which can derive from strange objects in everyday surroundings, and the general reader can relate to the concept as a result.

TIP: When possible, you should try to use linking words or phrases at the start of your paragraphs to show that your answer is well-organised and planned.

Finally, I believe Heaney's use of figurative language allows the reader to better understand some of the more difficult, scholarly ideas he puts forward in this piece. When he is discussing the way in which objects from the past can become 'a point of entry into a common emotional ground of memory and belonging', he begins with a simple metaphor in which he talks about 'the ghost life that hovers over the furniture of our lives'. He clarifies the idea still further in the next paragraph by saying that Hardy saw such objects as 'a capsule of the past'. In the final paragraph, Heaney claims that sensitivity to the past is 'a fundamental human gift', which I found rather difficult to fully process until he likened it to 'our gift for love'.

Although the ideas in this essay are undoubtedly profound, I came away with a clear understanding of the points Heaney was making and I am sure other readers would find the piece equally accessible and enjoyable.

TIP: A brief conclusion can tie up your answer neatly, but be sure not to introduce any new ideas at this point.

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TEXT 3 – QUESTION B **(50)**

Sample Plan:

1. What form should this task take?

This is a formal letter. Although the person to whom you are writing the letter is well-known, you do not know him or her personally.

2. What should the content be?

You are required to do three things in this letter:

a) Invite the person to contribute an object from his or her childhood and explain its significance.

b) Explain the inspiration for the project (the first paragraph states that your class was inspired by 'Seamus Heaney's essay about the importance of objects from the past', so read the text carefully before you begin).

c) Include, as an example, a piece you have written about an object from your childhood that is of significance to you.

3. Who is my audience?

Your audience is a well-known person who is not personally known to you.

4. What register should I use?

Your language should be formal (you do not know this person), descriptive (when talking about your exhibit) and persuasive (when you ask the person to contribute).

Sample Answer:

Ashtown College,
Main Street,
Cork.

President Michael D. Higgins,
Áras an Uachtaráin,
Phoenix Park,
Dublin

8th March 2014

Dear President Higgins,

I am a sixth year student in Ashtown College and our class is organising an exhibition to celebrate the significance of childhood objects in the lives of well-known people. We would like to invite you to contribute such an object to our 'Influences of the Past' exhibition, along with a written explanation of its personal significance. Should you agree, we will arrange for collection of the object and will, of course, ensure that it is returned to you in perfect condition immediately after the exhibition.

The project was inspired by an essay by the late Seamus Heaney entitled 'The Sense of the Past', in which he discussed the 'dormant energies' contained in objects from our childhood and the power these items have to connect us with our past in a meaningful way. As a long-time friend of Seamus Heaney and a celebrated poet in your own right, I am sure that you would wish to join with us in celebrating the importance of these 'temples of the spirit' in all our lives.

When the idea for this project was first suggested, we decided to run a trial version of the exhibition in our own class. I have included, by way of example, the written piece which accompanied my exhibit:

'This cheap and ugly little ceramic deer is the object that I have chosen to display in our exhibition. It is an unprepossessing piece, certainly, and has no obviously redeeming features. I see, as well as you do, the disproportionately long legs, the poor paintwork and the rather foolish grin on the deer's face. However, this tasteless little ornament is dear to me because it connects me not only with my own past but also with a sense of my family's history.

My earliest memory of this ornament includes a visit to my grandparents' house when I was very young. While my father was brought outside to see how well the onions were coming along in the vegetable patch, my mother was trapped on the sofa, admiring endless photos of newest additions to the family and agreeing that each and every one had 'a look' of some relation or other, usually around the eyes or mouth. Bored, I would wander out into the hall and pick up the ceramic deer, as it was the only vaguely toy-like object in that neat and rather fussy house.

Together, the deer and I would go on adventures as I gave it superpowers which enabled it to dive-bomb and obliterate the other, duller ornaments. Occasionally I would imagine that the deer and I were roaming together in some enchanted forest – the green carpet in the rarely-used 'good room' – and we would battle trolls and goblins as we waged wars around the legs of the musty-smelling chairs.

As I grew older, I forgot about the deer until a few months ago when I was helping my grandmother to repaint the hall. I picked it up as we cleared the shelf and marvelled once again that such an ugly thing could have pride of place in their home. My grandmother seemed to read my mind, because she took it from me and began to tell me the story behind it. She explained that it was the first gift my grandfather ever gave her: he won it at a local fair by throwing a small hoop over it. My grandmother told me how delighted she was when he gave it to her. They were both seventeen and she took the gift as a sign of his interest in her, which it undoubtedly was! She rummaged through some old photos and found one of them both, taken around that time. I was astonished to see how like me my grandfather was and how young and carefree both he and my grandmother looked.

I have looked at the deer with new eyes since that chat and I keep it on my desk at home. Every time I see it I feel a connection with my grandparents. It links me to the loving, elderly couple I knew and the young, wide-eyed couple I never knew.'

On behalf of my fellow classmates, I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this piece and for considering our request. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Ciarán O'Sullivan

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: A good way to approach this question is to look at cliff-hangers and their appeal through the years. The extract mentions Dickens, Victorian novels and the first movies, before moving on to present-day versions of the cliff-hanger.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Long tradition: Dickens' serialised books – public mania – 'alarmist essays'.
2. Radio and movies provided new media – Who shot J.R.?
3. Television continues the tradition – many different types of cliff-hanger, but appeal endures.

Sample Answer:

Emily Nussbaum provides ample evidence for the enduring appeal of the cliff-hanger, with examples from the 1800s right up to the present day.

TIP: This brief introduction shows the examiner that you have planned your answer and intend to give examples from three centuries of cliff-hangers. You must ensure that any point you raise in your introduction is fully explored in your answer.

Nussbaum points out that television is only the latest medium for the cliff-hanger and that the whole phenomenon was a large part of nineteenth-century novels, with readers so desperate to find out what happened next in one of Charles Dickens' serialised books, for example, that they rioted on the dock of New York harbour, clamouring for the next instalment which was due to arrive on a British ship. Their desperation to find out what happened to Little Nell shows just how compelling cliff-hangers can be. Possibly eager to avoid such an outburst of emotion amongst her own readers, Nussbaum hurriedly provides us with the spoiler alert that Little Nell was, in fact, dead! This public mania surrounding thrilling episodes in fiction worried some, and by Victorian times readers' fervour to find out what happened next triggered 'alarmist essays about addiction'.

The arrival of 'fresh formats' such as radio programmes and movies provided new media for the delivery of the cliff-hanger. Audiences were gripped by radio shows' 'thrill-packed endings' and by regular instalments of 'titillating disaster' films. It is clear there was a continuing hunger out there for the cliff-hanger in any form. The genre made the leap to television effortlessly. Nussbaum cites one of the most famous cliff-hangers of all, 'Dallas'' 'Who shot J.R.?', which gripped hundreds of millions of people worldwide and gave rise to countless imitators.

TIP: The question required you to show how Nussbaum's examples support her point about cliff-hangers. Therefore, you must keep referring to the text and showing how it supports her point, rather than focusing on your own feelings about the topic.

In recent times there has been another leap forward in terms of the way the story is told. Nussbaum points out that this now varies widely, from dramas such as 'The Sopranos' to experimental sitcoms such as 'The Office', but the one constant is the cliff-hanger itself and the expert manipulation of the audience through clever use of 'the gap between episodes'. It seems that no matter what the medium – be it novels, radio programmes, movies or television programmes – the staying power of the cliff-hanger is indisputable.

TIP: A brief conclusion (one sentence is sufficient) helps to pull your answer together.

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (ii) **(15)**

Note: You could deal with the images separately or together. A straightforward approach might be to write one paragraph on each image and a final one on the image that you found more effective and why.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Image 1: We wonder if characters will escape – cliché, unsubtle but effective – familiar.
2. Image 2: Modern image – modern appeal of cliff-hanger – dramatic camera angle – literal cliff-hanger.
3. Image 1 is more complex – raises more questions – love interest – stronger image.

Sample Answer:

Image 1 is a clichéd cliff-hanger from countless television programmes. A sinister man – presumably the villain – looms over a helpless victim strapped to a table, over which hangs an enormous blade. In the background, trussed up like turkeys and dangling from the ceiling, are another man and a woman, both young and smartly dressed. They look over helplessly at their fellow prisoner. In bold capitals across the centre of the screen are the tantalising words 'To be continued…' The audience is left in an agony of doubt over the fate of these individuals: a grisly end appears inevitable. This is the epitome of cliff-hangers, unsubtle but terribly effective. The fact that it is such a familiar image to all of us, and the fact that it is in black and white shows just how long this particular device has been around. Its exaggerated nature proves Nussbaum's point about cliff-hangers being 'part of some of the silliest shows on TV'.

Image 2, on the other hand, is a far more literal depiction of a cliff hanger. A young boy clings to a beam for dear life, his mouth open in a scream of terror. Beneath him, high-rise buildings appear tiny, thanks to a dramatic camera angle which makes the boy's clutching hands and anguished face loom large in the shot. He looks directly at the viewer, drawing them into the situation. This image shows what Nussbaum means when she says that 'manipulation is a virtue' in the world of the cliff-hanger. We are tugged 'to the next ledge' by this terrifying scenario. Will the child fall to his death? The manipulative nature of this sort of storyline is not new, but the skyscrapers, the colour and the modern setting show the continuing appeal of the cliff-hanger in today's world.

TIP: You must keep referring back to the question in your answer.

On balance, I think that Image 1 does a better job of developing my understanding of the cliff-hanger as a storytelling device. It is more complex, and leaves the viewer with a number of questions. Will the man on the table evade the blade? If we feel sure he will, then how will he do so? Will the dangling couple be freed? Is there a love interest that needs to be resolved between the young woman and one of the men? Image 2, on the other hand, is more straightforward. Either the boy will fall or he will be saved. There is less scope for storytelling here, I feel. Image 1 is altogether stronger and, as such, is a better illustration of the power of the cliff-hanger.

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Sample Plan:

The general rule is that for a twenty mark question you should write four points, but there are exceptions. Here you are given three separate headings, so a paragraph on each would be sufficient. You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Informs us about the cliff-hanger – history and definition.
2. Entertains – vivid language, engaging examples/references.
3. Comments – the writer's opinions are clear throughout – makes us think.

Sample Answer:

Based on this extract, I would certainly agree that *The New Yorker* is a magazine that informs, entertains and comments.

The most memorable aspect of this article, I feel, is the wealth of information it contains. Nussbaum speaks with authority on the topic in question and brings us with her on a journey from the era of Victorian novelists to the latest television series. For example, I was surprised to read that in Thomas Hardy's day novels were viewed as dangerous, rendering their readers' minds 'collapsed and imbecile'. This is certainly food for thought in an era where the works of Hardy and Dickens are considered quite high-brow and worthy of study in schools and universities.

Nussbaum's entertaining style prevents this piece from becoming a dry account of the history of the cliff-hanger, however. She opens with a definition and although this would be a sure-fire way for a less expert writer to bore readers, Nussbaum effortlessly succeeds in holding our attention with her vivid imagery and apposite examples, citing old favourites such as the ticking bomb and the lady tied to the train tracks. She goes on to give us some fascinating insights into the history of the cliff-hanger, neatly encapsulating two hundred and fifty years of this genre in a few gripping paragraphs. Well-chosen examples add authenticity and provide us with surprising information, such as the story of the mob in New York who rioted on the docks, so keen were they for the ship containing the latest episode of one of Dickens' serialised novels to arrive by ship from England. Throughout, Nussbaum's style keeps the article fresh and lively. In a wonderful simile, she compares the cliff-hanger to 'a bridge made out of lightning', connecting the storyteller to the audience in one bold, dramatic but fleeting moment.

TIP: Use plenty of words which show how entertaining Nussbaum's article is.

The article has added depth because of Nussbaum's insightful and thought-provoking commentary. She decries the manipulative nature of poorly-done cliff-hangers, calling them 'creepy' and 'shoddy craftsmanship'. On the other hand, she speaks appreciatively of the clever cliff-hanger which can 'make manipulation a virtue' and lift a show into greatness. Nussbuam's comments inspire us to look more closely at some of our own favourite shows and to examine what it is that keeps us coming back for more. Her expert deconstruction of what it is that makes cliff-hangers such a powerful and enduring aspect of storytelling is both educating and enlightening.

If Nussbaum's writing is typical of the standard of articles produced by *The New Yorker*, then I think there is little doubt that it can stand by its claim to 'inform, entertain and comment'.

EPL 050

TEXT 1 – QUESTION B (50)

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin your Question B:

1. What form should this task take?
This is a short talk.

2. What should the content be?
You must refer to the role that both television and radio play in the lives of young people. You do not need to give equal space to both, however.

3. Who is my audience?
Your audience is the people in your own class.

4. What register should I use?
It is up to you how formal or informal you want to be when talking to your fellow students. Try to be informative and persuasive as you get your viewpoint across.

Sample Answer:

Hi everyone. As part of this week's 'Media Matters' module, I decided to do a bit of research into the role that television and radio play in our lives today. I'd like to share my findings with you now, and see if they tally with your own experience.

Let's start with the radio. What I discovered was that very few teenagers listen to the radio regularly. I didn't count those of you who are forced to listen to your parents' choice of programme in the car on the way to school. I'm a victim of that too, and all I ever seem to hear is that the economy is bad, the weather is dreadful and the traffic is diabolical. And they wonder why we're not in good form coming into school! When it comes to making our own choices, however, the vast majority of us use our iPods or phones to listen to music we have downloaded. That makes complete sense, of course. Why would we want to be restricted to a presenter's selection of tracks? And do we really want to hear inane chatter between songs? Talk radio is even less appealing to most teenagers; the only exception being sporting programmes. Even then, most of us choose to listen to those on the station's website, at a time that suits us.

TIP: Inclusive language shows awareness of your audience.

The key here seems to be control. We are used to having music or podcasts on demand and on the go, and modern technology allows us to do that. It was different for our parents and our grandparents; they didn't have the choices we do. My grandfather still rings me sometimes to tell me to listen to something on the radio that might interest me, and he is baffled when I thank him and tell him that I'll catch it later, on the computer. His generation was in thrall to their favourite weekly programmes and finds it very difficult to understand that we don't see the need to sit quietly and allow someone else to present us with their musical offerings or views on topics of the day. Internet, iPods, phones and the rest of it have rendered radio almost obsolete for the majority of today's young people.

The news is far better for television. I think it is safe to say that all of us have our favourite TV series that we watch faithfully each week. I believe this is because we become involved in the lives of the characters and want to see how they will cope with the latest crisis in their lives. And there is always a crisis. That's what keeps us coming back for more, and that is something radio does not offer. Television is the only medium offering the narrative format today, and no matter how tech-savvy or sophisticated we are, we all love a good story. It's a great way to escape the pressures and

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irritations of the day and to lose ourselves in someone else's adventures. There is something for everyone, whether it's reality TV, sci-fi, thrillers, crime dramas or rom-coms. And let's not forget the edge-of-the-seat excitement that comes with following every moment of your beloved team's progress in a match!

In conclusion, then, I believe that while radio might fade into silence, television will continue to have a role in the lives of young people in the years to come. As long as there are complicated romantic situations to be resolved, last-minute goals to be scored or planets to be saved from ruthless invaders, we'll stay tuned.

TIP: Make it clear that your talk is coming to an end, and draw some conclusions from your findings.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: The word 'outline' means that you are not required to go into great detail.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. That is straightforward in this case as you are asked to outline three aspects of Trevor's approach to story writing. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Stories should be about real life and ordinary people.
2. Observation and memory are key to creation of character.
3. A hard-working imagination is key to development of characters/stories.

Sample Answer:
In this interview with Mira Stout, William Trevor gives us valuable insights into the art of storytelling.

The first aspect of writing which Trevor discusses is the importance of writing about real life and ordinary people. He quotes the famous short story writer Frank O' Connor's views in support of this opinion. Both men find heroes dull. Trevor believes that there is greater interest to be had from exploring the grey areas of people's lives than in focusing on the straightforward or 'black-and-white success' of the hero's experiences.

TIP: Short quotes woven into the fabric of the sentence support the points being made.

In order to create these un-heroic characters and make them believable, William Trevor says that he observes people closely. He stores what might appear to be 'useless information' about the people he meets, and is able to recollect this and use it years later. It is not that Trevor has any 'extraordinary insight'; it is just that he has a wonderful eye for detail and an incredible ability to access these memories when he needs to. The person he has studied – albeit briefly – becomes familiar to him and he feels he can develop a story around them.

Once William Trevor has begun to create a certain character, he falls prey to his 'very hard-working imagination' which he describes as nagging at him constantly, pushing him to find out what happens to the person in the story. This constant internal questioning forces Trevor to come up with more and more details about the character – 'stroking in the colours' – and the character is now 'a person in his or her own right'.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: Beware of wandering too far from the text in this answer. All your points should be firmly rooted in William Trevor's views.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Fashion in literature is dangerous – agree that people write to suit fashion.
2. Prizes and bestseller lists prescribe reading but remove personal discovery – partially agree.
3. Books are about more than superficial glamour and glossiness – agree.

Sample Answer:

The first point William Trevor makes in answer to the interviewer's final question is that literature has fallen victim to fashion and an 'entertainment-hungry public'. He believes that fashion has no place in literature or art and that it is actually destructive. I most definitely agree with Trevor on this point. The danger as I see it is that writers tailor their books to suit the current market rather than writing with passion and integrity. A quick visit to the 'Latest Releases' section in any bookshop will reveal a proliferation of brightly-covered paperbacks in which the heroine battles feckless, fickle boyfriends, heartless bosses and demanding family members but emerges a stronger, feistier woman at the end of it all. Inevitably, the author who has churned out the most recent offering in this hugely-popular 'chick-lit' genre will pop up on a variety of radio and TV shows to talk about her 'inspiration'. William Trevor says that fashion belongs 'on a coat hanger' rather than in the literary world, and I think he has a valid point.

TIP: In your answer you should try to strike a balance between your opinion and William Trevor's views. A good way to stay on track is to refer back to the text at the end of each paragraph, if possible.

An area in which I am less inclined to agree with William Trevor is the whole issue of prizes and bestseller lists. I see his point about people reading books simply because they have won an award or are at the top of the bestseller list, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. Hilary Mantel, for example, has had huge success with her award-winning bestseller 'Wolf Hall' and its sequel 'Bring Up The Bodies', and deservedly so. Fame and literary worth are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as Trevor himself should know! He has appeared on his fair share of bestseller lists over the years. I read bestsellers but do not follow their lists slavishly. I am still quite capable of 'discovering what to read myself' at the same time, and have derived great enjoyment from both methods of book selection.

TIP: The question asked you to discuss the extent to which you agree with William Trevor, so if you do not fully agree with him, it is fine to say so.

Trevor's final point about books being 'more talked about than read' in some cases is one on which I agree with him wholeheartedly. Books should be about more than 'Glamour and glossiness', but I have on several occasions heard people talking at some length about a fashionable book, only to admit on questioning that they haven't actually read it and are just echoing what they heard on a talk show discussion. Sadly, I think William Trevor is generally correct when he talks about the dangers posed to literature by our 'entertainment-hungry' culture.

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TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (iii) (20)

Note: While you are free to agree or disagree here, it would obviously be easier to agree. William Trevor is a famous author, therefore it is safe to assume his writing will be rich in language and imagery.

You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Figurative language – effective – 'like a cathedral' etc.
2. Relevant and informed references to other literature/art – adds depth.
3. Images are vivid and detailed.
4. Strong, authoritative tone lends power to argument.

Sample Answer:

In this relatively short interview, William Trevor manages to impress the reader with his unusual, vivid imagery; his definite, authoritative tone; and his relevant and informed reference to art and literature to support his points.

The first aspect of William Trevor's writing that struck me was his use of figurative language. A novel is 'like an intricate Renaissance painting' but also 'like a cathedral'. A short story, on the other hand, is likened to an impressionist painting and a portrait. When all of these comparisons are put together, it is easy to see how effective they are. The novel is impressive in scale and detail, while the short story is more concerned with giving us an impression of a person; a snapshot of them, if you like. Skilful writer that he is, Trevor extends the metaphor later in the interview, saying that creating a character is a matter of taking an image of a person and 'stroking in the colours, putting a line here and a line there'.

The references to art and literature are relevant and appropriate in a piece such as this. William Trevor does not talk down to his audience but assumes that they will understand the link between an impressionist painting and the strength of a short story being centred on 'what it leaves out just as much as what it puts in'. Similarly, he quotes Frank O'Connor's comment about characters in short stories but feels no need to explain who he is. The connections Trevor makes between his work and the work of others adds depth to this piece.

One of the most evocative elements of William Trevor's language in this piece is the detailed and vivid imagery. An excellent example of this is when he personifies his 'hard-working imagination', describing it as a '*very* inquisitive' entity that nibbles and gnaws at him constantly until he has fleshed out the character to its satisfaction. It seems entirely appropriate that in a section where Trevor is explaining the art of bringing a character to life and making them 'a person in his or her own right', he should in a small way do the same for the very part of himself that is responsible for this creation.

TIP: It is important to explain why you find the imagery effective.

In all of these descriptions, comparisons and references, one of the aspects of Trevor's language that stands out most strongly is his authoritative, almost forceful tone. There is no vacillating here; from the outset Trevor leaves us in no doubt as to his opinions. His statements are definitive and succinct and leave no room for doubt or dissention. Most responses contain at least one short declaration. Of the short story, he says 'It is essential art', and on the topic of heroes he states firmly that 'Heroes don't belong in short stories'. Trevor's desire to emphasise his points is shown in the use of italics: the short story '*should* be an explosion of the truth', and his imagination is *'very* inquisitive'.

This interview is about storytelling and William Trevor certainly succeeds in proving that he is a master of the craft through his use of rich and evocative language and imagery to hold the reader's attention from start to finish.

TIP: A brief, single-sentence conclusion helps to tie up your answer and link it back to the question.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION B (50)

Note: It is tempting to write about ordinary people who are everyday heroes, but that is a rather obvious approach. There is nothing wrong with it, of course, but neither is there anything wrong with being ordinary and not in the least heroic!

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B:

1. What form should this task take?
This is an introduction to a book, so the form is quite relaxed. All you need to do is share your opinions with the readers. Remember, they have probably bought the book already if they are reading the introduction.

2. What should the content be?
You need to explain:
(a) Why your class has prepared this book and
(b) Why you think it is important to celebrate ordinary people.

3. Who is my audience?
Your audience is anyone who buys the book. Therefore, you need to appeal to old and young.

4. What register should I use?
You need to be persuasive – you want to make people read the book with an open mind, to lead them to believe that it will be a worthwhile read and that it is in support of a worthwhile cause.

Sample Answer:

When I was asked to write the introduction to this book, I was surprised. Although I had been delighted to be involved in such a worthwhile project, I hadn't exactly been a key figure in the production of it. Therefore, I was quite flattered when the editor approached me last week to see if I'd be willing to take on the task. Flattered, that is, until he explained his reasoning.

TIP: Introductions to books are approached in a number of different ways. It is up to you how formal or informal you want to be, but remember to be consistent throughout.

'We initially thought of asking someone important – a local celebrity, the principal, or even the head boy – but then we decided that to do so would be inappropriate as this is a book about ordinary people. That's why we chose you. After all, you've been in this school for six years and you have never stood out in any way. No sporting or academic awards – nothing. You're never in trouble either, though. You're definitely the most ordinary person in our year.'

He beamed encouragingly, patted me on the shoulder and walked off. I stood there for a moment, fuming slightly. Then I thought about it. He was right. I am ordinary. Not fabulous, but not terrible. And yet I'm perfectly happy. I have good friends, I enjoy my pastimes, and I am on track to get into the third level course I want. I'll probably do reasonably well in that too, get an ordinary job, and continue to live an ordinary life. And do you know what? That's fine by me. Ordinary does not mean dull, after all.

Most of us are ordinary. Look around you, or even look at yourself. It's not an insult, don't worry. It just means that you're unlikely to set the world on fire, win the Nobel prize or go down in the annals of history. But without you, and thousands like you, our community wouldn't exist. These are the people featured in this book: shop keepers, teachers, mothers, fathers, plumbers, bakers. . . The list goes on. And each of them, like you and me, has a story to tell.

Whether new arrivals like Anka (page 23) or long-time residents like 101-year-old Cormac (page 47), these are the people you see almost every day, and they are the building blocks of our community. In our busy world, it's difficult

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to find time to stop and chat to those we meet out and about, but our hope is that by sharing these insights into the lives of those around you, we will foster a greater sense of community and maybe even encourage people to take the time to get to know their neighbours and colleagues a little better.

Of course, this book is not just a vanity project in which we celebrate the men and women of our community. The profits will go towards members of our community who aren't lucky enough to live ordinary lives. They are the homeless men, women and children who sleep rough on our streets every night. And they are helped by extraordinary people in the Simon Community. By buying this book, you risk jeopardising your 'Ordinary Person' status and stepping into the realm of everyday hero, but I for one am glad you took the chance. Thank you, and from one ordinary person to another, I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

TIP: This explains the purpose of the book by giving some information about the charity that will receive the profits.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Symbol of New York – hurricane – important to all New Yorkers.
2. It has inspired artists and writers.
3. McKeon herself is fascinated by it.

Sample Answer:

Belinda McKeon offers ample evidence to suggest that Grand Central Station has gripped people's imaginations since its opening in 1913. She begins by saying that it has become a symbol of New York, so that for many inhabitants of that city it was the photographs of the evacuated station 'that drove home the realisation that Hurricane Sandy was on its way'. The station and the people who pass through it are inextricably linked; it is 'given form by people'. Since it was built, they have 'people-watched from the galleries' and gazed in wonder at the beautifully painted ceiling high above.

McKeon tells us that the 'daily spectacle and observation has proven equally irresistible for photographers and film-makers over the years' and some of their work, such as John Collier's photographs of the concourse 'pinioned by great shafts of sunlight', have become iconic. Clearly, this station is more than just a railway terminal, it is a work of art in its own right. As well as its stunning design, the station has become a focal point for the hopes, dreams, lives and loves of the thousands of people who pass through it every day. It has been a rich source of inspiration for writers such as Richard Yates, who have created 'novels and stories born out of the very tension between that place's everyday treadmill and its gilded promises'.

TIP: Remember that the question asked you to refer to the written text only, so although you may refer to the images, you must confine yourself to what McKeon says about them.

Finally, the very fact that McKeon has written an article in praise of the station shows how fascinating it is to her and, presumably, to her readers. She writes with great affection and enthusiasm about the place and selects images and literary references which show it in a good light, such as the reference to a character in a John Cheever story who is so awestruck by the beauty of the platform that she thinks the 'frosty glitter' might be the dust of trodden diamonds. All of this evidence shows quite clearly that McKeon is not alone in believing that 'the sight of Grand Central's concourse does something to the soul'.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (ii) **(15)**

Note: Although this question allows the three images to be taken solely from the written text, it makes more sense to refer to the visual images as well. After all, you are discussing the written text in the other two questions, so you run less risk of repeating yourself if you have another source on which to draw.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Image 1 – light streaming through windows as if from heaven – scale of station clearly shown – black and white focuses our attention on the structure etc.
2. Image 2 – golden glow – ceiling – beauty of station emphasised – not merely functional – scale – camera angle etc.
3. Dance imagery in written text evokes sense of unity and beauty

Sample Answer:

I believe the most striking image in this text is John Collier's iconic photograph of the concourse. The aspect of it that immediately captured my attention was the light streaming in through the high windows. This effectively captures the grandeur and atmosphere of the station in two ways. First, it shows us the great height of the building. The shafts of light take up almost the whole frame of the photograph and dwarf the groups of people standing around below. Second, there is something reminiscent of a heavenly benediction in the way the beams of sunlight shine down on the concourse. The people in the shot are not moving, almost as if they are as awestruck by the sight as we are. Because the photograph is black and white, the streams of white light dominate the shot and focus our attention on the beauty and majesty of this astonishing place.

Image 2 is almost as impressive as Image 1. Here the station is bathed in a beautiful golden glow, making it appear sumptuous – almost as if it the walls and floor were gilded. The camera angle in this image highlights the width of the station and once again dwarfs the figures of the people. The bustling atmosphere of the station is captured in this image as the travellers are caught mid-step; some are even slightly blurred as they hurry by. The stars and signs of the zodiac on the gorgeous arched ceiling overhead are visible in this image, giving the impression that this is not just a functional place but a work of art in its own right.

TIP: When you are discussing visual images, it is appropriate to go into the same level of detail as you would if you were discussing a feature of the writer's style.

The written text also contains images which add to the impression that Grand Central Station is somewhere quite out of the ordinary. The writer compares the movement of the people through the beautifully designed concourse to 'a graceful dance' and says that while such numbers would cause 'an unpredictable stampede' elsewhere in the city, here they move in 'seemingly spontaneous choreography'. She uses this metaphor again later in the piece, saying that a trainload of commuters wove themselves into its choreography the moment they arrived, slipping straight into 'their steps of that every-morning dance'. The effect of this imagery is to make it appear that Grand Central Station imbues those who travel through it with a sense of the unity, grace and harmony that are central to the architect's vision for the terminal.

TIP: Whenever you point out a feature of style, you must discuss the effect it has on the piece.

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TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Note: You do not have to give equal treatment to the writer's knowledge of and affection for Grand Central Station, but you must mention both.

Make sure you refer to the content and the style of the written text.

Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point. You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Good knowledge of the history of the station – architect's intention etc.
2. Affection shown in her personal experiences of the station – knows it very well – has a favourite place etc.
3. Affectionate tone – almost like a doting parent 'Who wouldn't want to turn a camera?' – Announcer talking to 'you alone' etc.
4. Literary references show knowledge and affection – very detailed.

Sample Answer:

Belinda McKeon's knowledge of, and affection for, Grand Central Station is clear throughout this piece.

In the opening paragraph, McKeon provides us with interesting and informative details about the history of the station, including the vision of the chief architect, Whitney Warren. McKeon is well-versed in Warren's vision for the terminal and comments authoritatively on the success of his plan to design a station that was 'all about the crowd'. She tells us that it was an oasis of calm and order in the otherwise chaotic turn-of-the-century New York. Later in the article we are told a charming little tale about the history behind one part of the station, known as the Kissing Room. Apparently it was given that name because of the number of 'welcomes bestowed' on returning travellers, 'not least upon returning troops'. This blend of architecture and human interest shows just how informed McKeon is about different aspects of the station's history.

McKeon does not just provide us with a dry historical account of the station, however. This is a warmly affectionate look at a place that means a great deal to her and she shows this when she recounts her personal experiences in Grand Central Station, a place she obviously knows extremely well. She is so fond of the station that she even has a number of favourite places within it, top of the list being a nook in the Kissing Room which houses a shoe repair business. The sight of shoes resoled and wrapped up for collection would be unlikely to evoke an affectionate response in most people, but McKeon imaginatively and fondly sees beyond the mundane and imagines those shoes back on their owners' feet and echoing across the marble floor of the concourse once again.

TIP: Making links between paragraphs where possible makes your answer flow smoothly.

There are times when McKeon's tone almost moves from open admiration to the indulgent fondness of a doting parent. She asks if there could be anyone who would not want to take a photo of the place she describes as doing 'something to the soul'. This is not just a building in her eyes, but has a life and soul of its own. McKeon's humanising of the station is clear when she says that it 'looked, somehow, lost' when it was evacuated before Hurricane Sandy hit New York. It seems obvious that McKeon relates to this place on an emotional level and is not merely a well-informed observer.

TIP: The question requires you to comment on the author's style as well as the content of the piece.

In the detailed and apposite literary references we see both McKeon's knowledge of, and affection for, Grand Central Station. Quotes and references to novels and stories by John Cheever, Richard Yates and Richard Ford show how well-informed McKeon is – not just about the station itself but also about any mentions of it in literature. She praises Yates in particular for capturing what she sees as the 'tension between that place's everyday treadmill and its gilded promises'. The quote from one of John Cheever's stories tells us of a girl's amazement at seeing the 'frosty glitter' of the station floor and wondering if it was 'the dust of trodden diamonds'. This is a striking and beautiful image which seems to reflect McKeon's own admiration for this iconic place.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION B (50)

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin your Question B:

1. What form should this task take?
This is a feature article for a newspaper.

2. What should the content be?
You should name the place or public building and explain why you think tourists should visit it.

3. Who is my audience?
Tourists who are interested in learning about 'Must-See Attractions'.

4. What register should I use?
You can be serious or humorous, but you must remember to be persuasive and to give information about the place or public building you have chosen.

Sample Answer:

In the centre of Cork city, tucked away between the busy main streets, is the English Market. If you step through one of the gateways that lead you into this warren of shops and stalls, you are stepping into history. This covered market has served the people of Cork for over four hundred years and has survived famine, floods and fire. Its name derives from the fact that it was built in a wealthy part of the city and originally served the prosperous inhabitants, many of whom were Anglo-Irish. The poorer people shopped in what was known as the 'Irish Market' a few streets away where prices were lower. Times have changed, of course, and while the English Market is still famous for its high-quality produce, it is equally well-known for its superb value.

Whatever your tastes, you will find something to delight you here. From fish to fowl, from artisan breads to organic chocolates, there is something for everyone. One word of advice: bring cash, not cards. Most of the stallholders deal in cash only and believe me, you will want to spend!

TIP: Rhetorical questions are a feature of the language of persuasion.

All of this shopping can be tiring, so what could be nicer than popping upstairs to the award-winning Farmgate Café and enjoying delicious, wholesome food on the wooden balcony above the heart of the market? There is no better place in the city to sit and watch the world pass by. Keep an eye out for some well-known faces while you are there. Darina Allen, of the world-famous Ballymaloe Cookery School, is a regular visitor, as is her daughter-in-law Rachel. Best of all, of course, because this is a covered market you are safe from the vagaries of the Irish weather!

One of the most attractive aspects of the English market is that, despite its fame, it is not a tourist trap. This is a place where locals shop every day and they expect – and receive – good value, excellent quality and friendly service. There are no snooty, supercilious sales assistants here, but down-to-earth, helpful and often entertaining shopkeepers and stall owners: the real people of the Real Capital. This was never more obvious than during the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Cork a few years ago. As she and her entourage walked around the market, Prince Philip's eye was caught by some produce on one of the fish stalls. He pointed at fish cakes and asked the fishmonger what was in them. The immediate response: 'Fish, boy! What do you think?' epitomises the no-nonsense attitude all shoppers can expect. It's safe to say that if you visit the market, you will be treated like royalty too!

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (i) **(15)**

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. In this case, it is easy to do so as you are required to choose three pieces of evidence to support Laurence's claim that her childhood was 'never dull'. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Opening paragraph speaks enthusiastically about a place of mystery and extremes.
2. Changing seasons are beautiful and exciting – freedom to explore.
3. People are eccentric 'endless oddities of the place'.

Sample Answer:

From the very start of this extract there is ample proof that the world of Margaret Laurence's childhood was 'never dull'. In the introductory paragraph she speaks enthusiastically about a place of mystery and extremes. It is at once 'horrible and beautiful', full of 'splendours' but at the same time full of 'despairs like multitudinous pits of isolated hells'. This opening is intriguing and makes us wonder how one place could contain all of these seemingly contradictory elements. Margaret Laurence certainly succeeds in presenting her small prairie town as somewhere out of the ordinary.

TIP: Try to think of synonyms and antonyms for the word 'dull' so that your answer will not be too repetitive and dull!

As the extract progresses, we see more evidence to support Laurence's claim. She describes the wonders of each season and the 'continuing marvels' of the natural world. Winter brought with it the beauty of frost and snow and the 'Northern Lights flaring across the sky'. Summer was filled with a 'zillion different grasses', flowers and birds. As well as having such natural wonders all around her, Laurence was allowed great freedom to explore with her friends. Whether they were being towed across the frozen ground by the milk sleigh, wandering for miles through the deep snow of winter or poling an old scow through the small river, Laurence never seems to have had a dull moment. Her delight in her home place shines through her detailed descriptions of its astonishing variety and opportunities for childhood adventure.

TIP: If you want to shorten the writer's name, you must use their surname. Never refer to a writer by his or her first name only.

It was not just the natural world that interested Laurence. She says that the 'oddities of the place were endless', and she backs up this assertion with entertaining accounts of the eccentricities of its inhabitants, from the elderly lady who served bizarre snack foods to visitors, to the woman who dyed her hair 'a bright and cheery orange' so startling in its showiness that strangers mistook it for a feather hat, to her own stepmother who wore an entire fox fur around her neck. It is easy to see why Laurence was so stimulated by her childhood home that she carried the place with her in her mind long after she had left and says that whatever else it was, it was never uninteresting or dull.

TIP: Try to link your paragraphs whenever possible. It helps your answer to flow smoothly.

TIP: The final sentence links back to the question.

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: It is important to focus on the word 'present'. Do not make the mistake of talking about Laurence felt but rather how she feels about her prairie town.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. It is easy to break your answer into three points here because you are required to examine each of the last three paragraphs for evidence. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Realises she can't escape – home town is the source of her writing.
2. Knows the town formed her as a person as well as writer – acknowledges its faults.
3. Still influenced by home – formed her worldview – largely positive.

Sample Answer:

The final three paragraphs show how much the writer's perspective on her home place has changed since she was a young adult. Then, she 'couldn't wait to get away' but now she appreciates that it is not possible to escape because she carries the land and the town with her in her mind and always will do. She realises that the place is the 'mainspring and source' of her inspiration as a writer and neither time nor distance will change that.

TIP: Remember to keep your quotes short and relevant. The examiner will not be impressed by answers padded out with huge chunks of the original text, which merely proves that you can copy from the page in front of you.

Laurence is also aware that her home town formed her as a person as much as it did as a writer. It is important to her to 'come to terms' with the territory of her youth and all that happened to her there if she is to become self-actualised. Laurence is realistic and takes a balanced approach towards her childhood home, acknowledging that it had its faults and that it could be 'stultifying to the mind' at times, but never to the imagination.

TIP: Try to link your paragraphs whenever possible. It helps your answer to flow more smoothly.

Laurence's attitude towards the prairie town is largely positive. While there are things about her upbringing there that she still struggles with, she knows that it was during her time in that town and on that land that she became the person she is today and formed her own unique viewpoint on the world. She says that it was there that she 'learned the sight of my own particular eyes'.

It is clear from these final paragraphs that Laurence is keenly aware of the influence her home town had, and continues to have, on her development as a person and as a writer.

TIP: The final sentence links back to the question.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (iii) (20)

Note: You should be familiar with the various writing styles and should be able to list at least four features of each. You will be asked to comment on them in the reading comprehension, and use them in the Comprehension Question B and Composition.

Note the word 'effective'. In a twenty mark question you will almost certainly be asked to comment on the effectiveness of a given feature of style as well as identifying it and supporting your point with quotation from or reference to the passage.

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Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Personal voice throughout.
2. Sense of place: author's love and knowledge shine through.
3. Anecdotes: other people would be unlikely to know the details of author's life.
4. Reflection on events.

Sample Answer:

I believe that this passage is an excellent example of effective autobiographical writing. The author's personal voice, sense of place, entertaining anecdotes and reflection on her early life give us a unique insight into her world and mindset.

TIP: The opening sentence answers the question immediately.

TIP: The introduction lists the main points that will be developed in detail later in the answer.

From the opening paragraph, Laurence's personal voice is evident. Although she avoids use of the word 'I' at this early stage, her intimate knowledge of and love for the place is nonetheless clear. She describes it as a place of extreme emotions, and she is clearly caught up in the sense of 'jubilation and of mourning' that living in this prairie town for any length of time entailed. After this, Laurence draws us in even further to her home place by showing how strongly she felt – and still feels – about it. The use of the personal pronouns 'I' and 'we' throughout show how involved Laurence is with the place of her upbringing.

This personal voice is reflected in Laurence's loving depiction of her home place. She describes it in great detail and engages us as readers by telling us of the beautiful 'ferns and flowers' traced on the windows by winter frost, and of the 'zillion different grasses, stones and weed flowers' of her summer haunt by the poplar bluffs and river. We are captivated by the haunting 'banshee wolf-voices' of the coyotes, which could occasionally be heard when the author was making her way home at nightfall through winter woods 'meringued with frost'. This chilling description is balanced by the evocation of the scorching summers 'when no rain came and the wheat became blanched and dried before it headed'. Whatever the season, Laurence captures it beautifully in sensual and descriptive language which brings her prairie town to life for us. We are left with the firm impression that only someone who grew up in this place could have described it so accurately and evocatively.

TIP: Make sure that every paragraph is linked back to the question.

Another feature of autobiographical writing is the use of anecdotes which only the author would be likely to know. Laurence shares charming little narratives about the place and the people of her prairie town. She tells of poling an old wreck of a scow through the swamps of her local river and 'mending her with wodges of hastily chewed Spearmint'. These tiny details add authenticity and are things we would never know or guess if Laurence hadn't chosen to share them with us. She also tells us of seemingly unimportant but nevertheless revealing details about the townsfolk, such as the fact that one lady served 'soda biscuits spread with peanut butter and topped with a whole marshmallow', while another lady cheerfully sported a bright orange hairdo. All of these stories give us a window into Laurence's view of her childhood in this 'strange place', and are things we would probably never learn if her story was told by a third party.

The final feature of autobiographical writing that I noticed was Laurence's reflection on her childhood and her analysis of the way it had affected her. She looks back at her upbringing with a mixture of nostalgia and appreciation. She knows that whatever she thought of the place where she grew up, it formed her and was 'the mainspring and source' of her writing. She is honest in admitting that there were things about the prairie town which stifled her mind, but she openly admits that the place was 'never boring' and that it stimulated her imagination and taught her how to develop her own voice and learn who she truly was.

In the third paragraph, Laurence claims that 'you really have to live there to know that country' but her wonderful autobiographical account makes us feel as if we have lived there and shared in her love for and understanding of her home place.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION B **(50)**

The Elms,
Glenville,
Co. Cork

Ms Margaret Laurence,
No. 8 Regent Street,
Lakefield,
Ontario,
Canada

6 June 2012

Dear Ms Laurence,

It was with great interest that I read your wonderfully evocative description of your home place. As you so astutely point out, the majority of descriptions of prairie towns focus on the flatness and seeming dullness of the surrounding landscape. However, you opened my eyes to the magic inherent in the place. I was particularly moved by the way you lovingly described how each season brought with it a new type of beauty. As an Irish person unaccustomed to anything more than a light dusting of snow in the coldest months, I read with fascination of your childhood adventures in this winter wonderland. Your language was positively poetic as you waxed lyrical in your description of 'the perpetual fascination of the frost feathers on windows, the ferns and flowers and eerie faces traced there during the night by unseen artists of the wind'. Your eye for detail really brought this scene, and others, to life for me.

Your descriptions of the summer were no less compelling, again because of the beautiful, sensual images. The setting you describe is unfamiliar, but the childhood play is not. I could almost hear the song of the meadowlark and feel the scorching sun on my back as I lost myself in your wonderful recollection of you and your young friends poling the battered old boat along the little river.

Not everything in your essay was strange or exotic to me, and an aspect of your writing which I found particularly intriguing was the way in which your childhood mirrored mine. Although we grew up thousands of miles apart, I was struck by the universality of childhood. What child would not relish a day off because of heavy snow, and is there any child on the planet who would not then immediately dash out into those same conditions deemed too dangerous and inclement to allow children to travel to school?

Your love for your home place shines through every word of this essay. This is something you and I share. Although I live in a suburb of a small Irish city, there is a feel of the country town to the area. People tend to stay here, and if they have to leave for further education or for work, most of them come back if they possibly can. I understand that, as there is a great sense of community in our local area.

You say that your childhood shaped you and made you the person you are today. I feel exactly the same way, and I am perfectly content with that. To an outsider, this place may seem dull and much like any other little village that has been swallowed up by suburban sprawl, but all I see is the playgrounds of my childhood. At the top of the hill is the small stream where my sisters and I – along with a gang of neighbourhood children – fished for tadpoles every summer. Across the road is the small wood where we walked our dogs, climbed trees and made innumerable camps and fortresses. And all around me are the houses of my childhood friends. Nowadays they are my companions for evenings out in town rather than summer days in the woods and fields, but their friendship brings me the same sense of security and warmth that it always did.

I'm not sure that I would have put my thoughts about my home place into words were it not for your charming essay about your childhood, but I am grateful to you for helping me to see the value of all that I had as a small child, and still have today. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and for inspiring your readers to look around them with new and appreciative eyes.

Yours sincerely,

Clodagh O'Sullivan

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TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (i) **(15)**

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. That is quite simple in this case as the question asks for three of Mary Robinson's points from the text. Don't forget to explain why you believe that each point supports her case that it is important to commemorate the Irish famine of 1845. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Shaped our national identity.
2. Connects us to the diaspora.
3. Encourages us to empathise with reality of famine for people in Third World today.

Sample Answer:

In this extract, Mary Robinson makes a powerful and convincing case for the need to commemorate the Irish famine of 1845. She argues that culturally, politically and socially, we must not turn a blind eye to the past but must instead embrace it.

TIP: The opening sentence answers the question immediately and gives an outline of the points which will be developed in the next three paragraphs.

The first reason the former President gives for commemorating the famine is that by so doing we are coming to a better understanding of our national identity. She points out that the famine 'shaped us as a people' in a way that no other single event in our history did and that it showed how strong is our 'will to survive'. In its devastation, the famine also made us aware of our 'human vulnerability'. It would be difficult to argue against the importance of our coming to terms with what has made us the people we are today, and learning how – in part at least – we came to have the attitudes and values we now possess as a nation.

Mary Robinson also points out that we are not alone in being shaped by the famine. We are descended from one group of survivors, but there are many millions more who are descended from those who fled the country and made a new life in the United States and elsewhere. Like us, they are who they are today because of that terrible time. Robinson quotes a striking sentence from Robert Scally's 'The End of Hidden Ireland' in which he says that those emigrants' last view of Ireland was also their 'first sight of themselves'. Commemorating the famine leads to a greater understanding of these emigrants and forms a strong link between the diaspora and ourselves. Considering the millions of people around the globe who claim Irish heritage, this is a very good reason to mark the events of 1845 and thus strengthen our connection with the families of those who were forced to flee.

The third, and I believe the strongest, point that Mary Robinson makes is that by commemorating the famine we are more likely to reflect on the connection between the 'nightmare images' of the Irish famine and the terrible reality of present-day famine in countries around the world. She points out that almost twelve million children have died needlessly in the developing world in one year alone, and that the figure could have been a tiny fraction of that if 'the world's resources were better distributed'. If, as she says, learning about our own famine could better prepare us to empathise with the sufferers and help end such horror, then it is most certainly something we should embrace 'with every fibre of our moral being'.

TIP: Show the examiner that you have planned your answer and organised your points. Using phrases like 'the third, and I believe the strongest, point' makes your answer appear structured.

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TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: You should be aware that there are two parts to this question: you must identify three elements of effective speech-writing and discuss what it is that makes each one so effective.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. As the question asks you for three elements of effective speech-writing, that is quite straightforward in this case. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Inclusive language draws us in and engages us.
2. Tone of piece is dramatic – varied sentence structure and imperative verbs add to this impression.
3. Literary references reinforce the point and add emotional impact.

Sample Answer:

One of the first features of effective speech-writing which caught my eye in this text is Mary Robinson's use of inclusive language. She draws the reader in immediately by saying that the famine 'shaped us as a people'. At once we identify with the topic and it has relevance to our lives. Robinson continues to create a rapport between herself and the readers as the address continues, referring constantly to 'us', 'our' and 'we'. As we read on, we feel that we share ownership of the ideas being expressed and the points being made. This technique is most appropriate for the subject matter in that the former President is trying to stress the importance of our fully embracing, reflecting on and then acting on the events of the past. The fact that some of this inclusive language is contained in rhetorical questions beginning with phrases such as 'How ready are we…?' and 'How willing are we…?' adds to our sense that we are inextricably linked to the subject matter and bear shared responsibility for any action or inaction.

TIP: You should clearly identify the element of speech-writing in the opening sentence.

TIP: Remember to comment on the effectiveness of the features of style

The tone of the writing is quite dramatic and compelling and forces us to sit up and take notice. This is achieved by variations in the sentence structure and by repeated calls to action. Robinson tells us that it is 'important, indeed imperative' that we commemorate the famine and learn from its lessons, and she reinforces this throughout the piece with words and phrases which stress the pressing need to act on the lessons of history. She uses the phrase 'We need to' several times and cleverly ends by switching to the passive voice for emphasis in the final line: 'It must be understood with every fibre of our moral being'. This change from active to passive voice draws our attention by being different and thus encourages us to focus on this last sentence. Robinson uses variety in a similarly dramatic way in the fourth paragraph when she lists the dreadful consequences of the famine. Her terse, incomplete sentences are jarring and stark: 'The bailiff, the famine wall. The eviction. The workhouse.' At no stage in this address are we allowed to be lulled into any sense of relaxation, which is entirely appropriate for such a serious and difficult topic.

The final point that I believe makes this a most effective speech is the way Robinson weaves literary references into her writing in order to reinforce and vividly illustrate the points she is making. By quoting from writers and poets such as Robert Scally, Eavan Boland and Seamus Heaney, Robinson shows us that hers is a viewpoint that is supported by eminent and respected literary figures. For example, the beauty of the quotation from Heaney: 'and where potato diggers are/you still smell the running sore' adds emotional impact to the speech.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (iii) (20)

Note: There are three areas that must be covered in this question:
1. Discussion of the visual images.
2. Connection between the visual images and Mary Robinson's speech.
3. How the audience might react to the combination of visual images and speech.

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Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Image 2: Intimate image – connection would show audience that Mary Robinson practises what she preaches.
2. Real woman, not a statistic. Name given. Positive image because she is health worker. Would encourage audiences by showing them that aid could make a difference.
3. Image 3: Graph shows stark truth – shows true scale of disaster in Horn of Africa – headline is attention-grabbing and emotive.
4. Clever use of examples – both tsunami and earthquake were in the news for weeks on end – sobering for audience to realise how little they know about Horn of Africa.

Sample Answer:

If I were to choose two images to accompany this speech, I would select the second and third images.

Image 2 shows Mary Robinson in conversation with a Somalian health worker. The first thing that strikes me about this photograph is how intimate it is. They appear deep in conversation, and are smiling as they look at one another. Mary Robinson is leaning slightly towards the other woman and is clasping her hand warmly. She is even wearing clothes which show her desire to blend into the community during her visit – insofar as such a thing is possible. It is clear that the former President is making a genuine effort to engage with the people who are on the frontline of suffering in Africa, and this empathy is reflected in her speech when she urges us not to 'distance ourselves, switch off' when the issue of famine in other countries is raised. This image would show an audience that Mary Robinson is practising what she preaches and thus would lend credence to her statements.

TIP: Remember that you were asked to comment on the impact your chosen image would have on the audience.

This image, I feel, is an excellent representation of what Mary Robinson means when she talks about the need to 'close the gap between the idea of hunger and the fact of it'. Nadhifa Ibrahim Mohamed is a real person, not simply a 'mere statistic'. The fact that her name is given in full underneath the image highlights this. Neither is she the sort of person who, sadly, we see on our screens when famine in Africa hits the news again. The pictures of starving children are, sadly, almost stereotypes at this stage, and if one of them was to be used as a backdrop I think it would provoke the usual, uncomfortable feelings of depression and helplessness. The woman in this photograph, on the other hand, is a health worker and is working to alleviate the suffering of those in need. I think this would go some way towards balancing the bleak tone of the speech when Mary Robinson talks about the 'terrible equivalents' of our famine around the world 'at this very moment'. People need a note of hope to hold on to and a reason to believe that aid sent to these places can make a difference.

Image 3 is very different to Image 2, but I think it would be effective to have two very different representations of the situation in Africa in order to encourage the audience to think about the issue in different ways. The graph shows the stark truth about the scale of the crisis in the Horn of Africa. The headline above it is attention-grabbing and emotive. The word 'Fact' at the start and the capital letters used throughout make the message unavoidable. The audience would be moved by the powerful and distressing words 'displacing, starving and killing', and the use of the present continuous tense reminds readers that this is an ongoing situation, reinforced by Mary Robinson's asking how many of us are ready to see that the equivalent of our famine is happening around the world 'at this very moment'.

TIP: It is important to remember that the question asked you to refer to both the visual and the written text.

The examples used as comparison with the African crisis are very cleverly chosen. Any audience would clearly remember the huge media coverage that followed the 2004 Indonesian tsunami and the 2010 Haiti earthquake. The graph, however, shows clearly that those terrible events still resulted in far fewer deaths than have the war and famine in the Horn of Africa. The vivid red colour of the square depicting the 13 million African victims adds a dramatic touch to the image and is certainly eye-catching. It is sobering to realise how little media coverage there has been about the African situation compared to the news saturation after the tsunami and earthquake. An audience viewing this and listening to Mary Robinson's comment about our unwillingness to face facts about current famines would be likely to feel quite uncomfortable.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION B **(50)**

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B:

1. What <u>form</u> should this task take?
A proposal is similar to a persuasive essay. It should be well-organised, clear and concise.

2. What should the <u>content</u> be?
Look carefully at the question. It requires you to do three things:
(i) Name the person or the event.
(ii) Give a reason or reasons for commemorating this person or event.
(iii) Suggest the form the commemoration might take.

3. Who is my <u>audience</u>?
You are submitting this proposal to a national or local authority, so it will be read by adults you do not know.

4. What <u>register</u> should I use?
You should aim to make a strong case in favour of your choice, so it would be appropriate to use the language of argument and/or persuasion. It is up to you to decide how personal or formal the proposal should be, but it is unlikely that a chatty, relaxed tone would be taken seriously by a national or local authority!

Sample Answer:

In just under twelve months' time the centenary of the outbreak of WWI will be marked in Britain, Belgium, France, New Zealand, America and a number of other countries around the globe. However, as yet there is no plan for the Irish government and people to commemorate this event. This is quite extraordinary, when we consider that approximately 200,000 Irishmen fought in the Great War. It remains the single largest military deployment in Irish history, yet because it took place against a backdrop of the Irish struggle for independence, it is largely ignored. Certainly, individual groups in various counties mark Remembrance Sunday in their own way each year, but these are small events scattered throughout the country. I feel strongly that we should seize on this centenary year to establish a joint Irish and British commemoration ceremony.

I propose that a candlelight vigil be held in the Irish National War Memorial Gardens on the evening of the anniversary of 4 August 1914. Representatives of the British government should be invited to attend, and Irish officials could likewise travel to Britain on the same day to participate in a similar service that is scheduled to take place in Westminster Abbey. At 11pm, the candles should be extinguished as that is exactly 100 years since the moment that 'the lamps went out all over Europe'.

TIP: The question required that you suggest the form the commemoration might take. It is best to stick to a simple suggestion so that you can explain it briefly and clearly.

I believe that such a commemoration would provide both us and our nearest neighbours with an opportunity to improve understanding between the two countries and that it would contribute to the ongoing reconciliation process between the peoples of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

It is famously said of WWI that it was originally thought to be 'the war to end wars'. Sadly, we now know this not to be the case. However, even though it did not fulfil that hope on a global scale, WWI may do so now on a smaller scale through a joint commemoration between two countries that are, after a long and bitter history, finally beginning to see the benefits of a lasting and healing peace. Much has divided us in the past, but we could surely unite in a sensitive remembrance ceremony for the fallen dead of both nations who fought side by side in WWI.

TIP: Persuader words and phrases and inclusive language are appropriate in a persuasive piece like this.

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TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (i) **(15)**

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

Make sure that each paragraph contains a topic sentence with at least one word describing Paul Theroux's character.

1. Philosophical – reflects on meaning of his travels.
2. Gently humorous – pokes fun at himself and others from time to time.
3. Observant – able to be philosophical and humorous because he notices tiny details and can reflect on them.

Sample Answer:

In this extract, Paul Theroux comes across as a most interesting person: a philosophical, observant man with a gentle and self-deprecating sense of humour.

TIP: The introduction lists the points that will be developed in more detail throughout the answer.

Theroux's philosophical nature is clear from the opening paragraph, where he reflects on the 'strangeness and disconnection' that he sometimes feels on travelling. He delves deeper into this idea and wonders why it is so, coming to the conclusion that he feels this sensation most keenly when revisiting places he has been before. He says that it is 'impossible to return to an early scene in your travelling life and not feel like a spectre'. This idea of being changed, or of finding the revisited place changed, is almost identical to the famous quote by the philosopher Heraclitus who said that no man could ever step into the same river twice as he is not the same man and it is not the same river. Later in the extract, Theroux also muses on the role revisiting these places could play in helping him to discover who he was and where he had been. Clearly Theroux is more than an ordinary traveller; he is a man who ponders the significance of his journeys and uses them to form certain opinions about the 'still, sad music of humanity'.

Theroux's philosophy is tempered with humour, and nowhere is this more evident than in his observations about the 'nostalgia bore' that he might become if he were not careful. He captures the essence of these people perfectly in a way with which we can all identify, giving voice to these imaginary people and their tedious reminiscences: 'In my day…' We heartily applaud Theroux's imagined response: 'Oh, shut up!' This invented dialogue is the mark of a man who does not take himself too seriously, in that he is willing to concede that he could possibly become one of these boring types. Theroux's humour is a gentle one; he notices the bizarre habit some Londoners have of 'wearing no hat in the rain' but carrying umbrellas nonetheless. In the same way, he recalls his children's 'pale faces and skinny legs' in their primary school years. The humour in this extract is kindly as Theroux looks at himself and the people of his homeplace with a mixture of amusement and affection.

Thereoux's philosophical nature and his sense of humour are rooted in his keen observations of the world around him. He does not merely look, he notices all the little details and thus is able to reflect on them later. A quick trip through Waterloo Station to catch his train is enough for him to take in not only the facial expressions and mannerisms of his fellow travellers but also the sad sight of a 'gaunt young woman' begging at the foot of the steps. A journey through south London jogs his memory as he sees the places he used to visit as a younger man. In each case, he has a vivid memory of the place and shares with us the memories that flood his mind as he sees the spot where his bike was stolen or the shop where he chatted with the owner in Swahili. While most of us may sit on a train and allow the landscape to flash by, Theroux sees his former life 'pass before [his] own eyes' instead.

TIP: If you need to replace a word or phrase in the original quote to aid comprehension or flow of your sentence, then put the replacement inside square brackets [ ]. This shows the reader that the replaced words are yours and not part of the original text.

Although this is only a short extract, Theroux's appealing personality comes across very strongly indeed.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (ii) **(15)**

Note: It may seem obvious from the question – and it should be – but be sure to compare and contrast both images in your response. Again, it may seem obvious, but you should explain why your chosen image best complements the text. This means referring to the written text to support your answer.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Image 1 is a little obvious – map and train leave little to the imagination. Poor quality/cartoon lessens importance of journey.
2. Image 2 best captures sense of mystery and of time flying by. Black and white makes it timeless. Ghostly and haunting.
3. Theroux's piece is evocative and reflective. It is thought-provoking. Image 2 captures this.

Sample Answer:

I feel that Image B best captures the essence of Paul Theroux's text.

TIP: When referring to the visual text, be as specific as you would when referring to the written text.

Image A is a little obvious for a piece of this level of reflection and depth. It features a cartoon drawing of a train moving along poorly-drawn tracks with a backdrop of a map of Russia and China. At the centre left of the frame is a sketch of a number of people walking along a train station platform. The overall effect of this image is to tell the reader that the extract is about train journeys across the East. This is something that could be deduced from the introduction to the text. There is no sense of atmosphere in this image, just a rather basic depiction of a train ride. The title of the book from which the extract is taken and the idea of the author being a ghost or spectre as he revisits the places he first travelled to many years before, is central to the text. The very clear-cut image, however, neither reflects the feelings experienced in this important journey which was at times 'sad and spectral' nor the author's sense of being a 'haunting presence'.

Image B, on the other hand, evokes a sense of mystery because it is set in a dark train station and shows a featureless train speeding by. It is a photograph, not a cartoon drawing, and this adds authenticity to the image. The train is moving so fast that it is a blur of light and lines. This reflects the author's feeling of the years flying by and of time passing before his eyes as he moves through places which had been important to him at various stages in his life. The mysterious quality of the image is enhanced by the empty train platform. There is not a person to be seen anywhere in this picture, which is in keeping with Theroux's observation about feeling 'like a spectre' and a 'haunting presence' when revisiting the places on his route. This is a ghostly image, and the atmosphere it creates is very much suited to the 'sad and spectral' places Theroux mentions in this extract.

The extract from Theroux's book is evocative and thought-provoking. In it he reflects on the emotional impact of revisiting places he has been before. I believe Image B allows the reader a freer imaginative rein than does Image A and therefore better conveys the sense of the author's feelings as he embarks on this journey. Image A is cheerful and factual, but Image B's lack of clarity better conveys a 'nameless feeling of strangeness and disconnection'.

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TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Note: The second sentence in this question makes it clear that you must refer to content and style in your answer. You can blend the two in your answer, of course. There is no need to write a separate paragraph on each.

Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Narrative approach – engaging story of his past and present life.
2. Self-aware and amusing – knows that such reminiscences might be dull.
3. Intimate and reflective – readers can relate to him.
4. Evocative and descriptive language – brings scene to life and creates atmosphere.

Sample Answer:

Theroux is an engaging and interesting writer who successfully brings to life what could, in the hands of a less skilled author, be a dull account of train journeys past and present.

The first and probably the most instantly attractive aspect of Theroux's writing is his narrative approach. This is not a dry account, but an engaging story of the writer's decision to return to the places he had travelled to thirty-three years before. The section in which he describes his trip through south London is a particularly good example of Theroux's ability to tell us about his travels in an interesting way. He lists the places he sees as the train speed by, and he has a touching or amusing memory of each one: here is the street where his bike was stolen, there is the newsagent's where he used to chat in Swahili to the owner and so on. These little anecdotes make it easy for us to relate to Theroux and thus we want to know more about his journey.

Theroux does not take himself or his story too seriously and this is an appealing characteristic in a writer. He knows that there is a danger he might become overly nostalgic and start harping on about bygone days: 'There was a big tree in a field where that building is now' and his wonderfully impatient and amusing 'Oh, shut up!' are directed at this facet of his own personality as much as to the imaginary 'nostalgia bore'. Because Theroux alerts us to the possible pitfalls of a journal such as his and then makes it clear that he has no intention of allowing himself to indulge in such self-serving reminiscences, the reader is reassured that this self-critical author will endeavour to keep his writing interesting and engaging.

TIP: The question asks you to explain why you think Theroux's writing is so appealing. Each paragraph in your answer should refer to this.

However, Theroux does not treat his subject matter too lightly either. He strikes a wonderful balance between self-deprecation and self-knowledge. He reflects on the impact his journey might have on him and wonders how he will feel about revisiting places many years after he first saw them. This is a journey of self-discovery as much as anything else, and this adds another layer to Theroux's account of his travels. His writing has an intimacy that I would not normally associate with travel literature, and I think that many readers would relate to him as a result. They would be as interested in the man as in the revisited places on his 'long-ago itinerary'.

The final reason I believe Theroux's writing is so appealing to readers is his wonderfully evocative and descriptive language. Whether he is comparing himself to a 'creepy spectre from the underworld' or describing the places he saw as 'sad and spectral', Theroux creates a marvellously haunting atmosphere which both entertains and fascinates the reader. We are compelled to read on and discover exactly why he feels this way. Even when describing something

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as mundane as a train journey through Clapham in the rain, Theroux manages to bring it to life for us in an almost poetic way. The onomatopoeic 'clattering' perfectly captures the rattle of the wheels on the track, while the rhythm and alliteration in 'shiny rain-drenched rails' evokes the repetitive motion of the train. The beauty of the language in this piece makes it a pleasure to read.

TIP: When you are talking about a writer's style, don't forget to use some of the literary terms you learned when preparing for the poetry section of your exam.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION B (50)

Note: Your school's Student Council is currently discussing the issue of school outings, educational trips, theatre visits, etc. Write a **persuasive article** for your school website supporting or opposing such events.

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B:

1. What form should this task take?
This is an article for a school website.

2. What should the content be?
You must give a number of reasons for supporting or opposing school outings etc. Examples would help here. You can make them up, but they should be credible. Think of events your school has run over the years and use those if possible. Obviously, you should not give the real name of your school or of any pupils or staff members.

3. Who is my audience?
Your audience is anyone who might read the school website. Realistically, that means anyone from first years to teachers, parents and grandparents.

4. What register should I use?
How formal or informal you decide to be is up to yourself. Remember, though, that this is an opportunity to show the examiner your command of English, so write as well as you can. You should use features of the language of argument/persuasion.

Sample Answer:

As most of you probably know, the issue of school outings, trips and tours is a hot topic in Student Council meetings at the moment. There is concern amongst pupils and staff members that perhaps these trips are too costly during a recession, and that they eat into valuable class time. I feel very strongly, however, that the benefits of these trips more than justify the time and money spent.

Of course we all need to go to class to learn the basic concepts in all subjects, but in order to consolidate our learning we need to apply our newfound knowledge to real-world situations, or at least see those concepts translated into concrete realities. I know, for example, that everyone who went on the school tour to Lyon last year benefitted greatly from immersing themselves in the French language and culture and felt far more confident in their aural and oral examinations as a result. DVDs and CDs are all well and good, but they are still largely passive ways of learning and they cannot compare to interacting with native speakers in their home country.

TIP: You can make up examples (as I have done here) but try to make them credible.

It's not just language students who benefit from school trips; the study of other subjects is also greatly enhanced by field trips and outings. I know from personal experience that there is no comparison between reading about features of glacial erosion in a Geography textbook and actually standing on the edge of the spectacular Devil's Punchbowl

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corrie on Mangerton Mountain, as our class did only last week. Equally, the Junior Cert History classes found their visit to Craggaunowen both informative and fascinating and a great way to learn what life in Celtic Ireland was really like. You could argue that students could go to these places in their free time, but let's face it; are we really likely to motivate ourselves to organise such trips? I don't think so. Even if we did, we would be lacking the expertise of our teachers and we would not get full value from the day. There are those who argue that while academic trips might be worthwhile, outings to adventure and sports centres are not. Again, I strongly disagree. Transition Year students in particular get to engage in a wide range of activities that they might not get the chance to do otherwise. A quick look through the photos in the library shows groups kayaking, rock climbing, trying archery and horse riding, to name but a few sports. For some students, this year can lay the foundations for life-long, healthy interests and can allow them to shine in a sphere other than the purely academic. They get to know their fellow students and teachers in a new way and to interact with them under more relaxed circumstances. This can be a great way to build school spirit and foster confidence within individuals. This can, of course, improve relationships between students and teachers back in the classroom, which is yet another aid to learning and performance.

TIP: Rhetorical questions show awareness of the audience and are a feature of the language of argument/ persuasion.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that school trips can enhance our studies of the natural and man-made world, hone our language skills, show us the links between past and present, introduce us to new sporting interests, aid our health and help our personal development. That's a lot of reward for a relatively low cost, and I, for one, think it is well worth it. I hope you agree and that you'll make your voice heard when discussing it with parents and teachers in the coming days.

TIP: A brief conclusion sums up the main points of the argument and shows audience awareness.

TEXT 1 QUESTION A (i) **(15)**

Note: Careful reading of the question will show that you are expected to discuss both Marlowe's character and her lifestyle. You would not be expected to give equal space to both.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Personality and lifestyle: well-read, highly-educated, intelligent; quotes at will from literature etc.
2. Personality is positive and humorous: is kind about people and amusing about Spike.
3. Lifestyle: nomadic, cosmopolitan; lived in a variety of countries.

Sample Answer:

The aspect of Lara Marlowe's personality which struck me immediately was what an erudite person she appears to be. The extract is littered with quotations from and references to artists and writers on the subject of cats. Marlowe moves effortlessly and seamlessly from the eighth century 'Pangur Bán' to the artists Foujita and Steinlen and from there back to the literature of Ernest Hemingway and Baudelaire. That art and literature are an integral part of Marlowe's life is clear in her casual mention of recalling 'the words of an eighth-century Irish monk' each time her cat disturbs her writing, her attendance at a recent 'Bloomsday celebration where actors read excerpts from "Ulysses" ' and the fact that her favourite T-shirt 'bears a cat face drawn by Jean Cocteau'.

TIP: 'Erudite' means being learned or scholarly: having or showing knowledge gained by studying.

TIP: When you are quoting within a quote, use a different type of quotation mark. If you have used single quotation marks at either end of the quote from the passage, use double quotation marks for the quote within that quote, and vice versa.

Marlowe also appears to be a kind, positive person with a lively sense of humour. She does not seem to have a bad word to say about anybody: although she disagrees with Rosita Boland's comment about cats, she nonetheless refers to her as 'a cherished friend and colleague'. A 'stern' administrator is mentioned, but only in the context of the improvement in their relationship. When Marlowe talks about her own emotions, it is generally in positive terms: she 'loves' Joyce's description of Molly; her cat makes her laugh every day; his presence makes reading a book 'more pleasurable' and he responds enthusiastically to her cheerfulness. Marlowe's humour is seen in her tongue-in-cheek descriptions of her 'sense of betrayal' on discovering that a writer she admired regarded cats as 'snakes in fur' and in admitting to having 'second thoughts' about a visitor her cat disliked.

TIP: It is reasonable to assume that Marlowe admires Edith Wharton as she refers to the visit to her house as a 'pilgrimage'.

Lara Marlowe's lifestyle, as outlined in this passage, is an excitingly cosmopolitan one. The introduction tells us that she worked in Paris and Beirut before moving to Washington, a fact which the writer herself alludes to a number of times in the piece, for example when telling us that Walter was her 'Beirut Puss' and Spike is her 'Irish Moggy'. Marlowe leads a sophisticated life in these various places: learning Arabic, attending a Bloomsday celebration, being on reasonably familiar terms with an administrator in the Élysée Palace and so on. Her Washington home sounds enviably elegant with doves cavorting in the magnolia trees which surround her balcony. Overall, the descriptions in this piece make Marlowe's life in the various places she mentions sound very pleasant indeed.

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (ii) **(15)**

Note: Although you are only asked to identify and comment on two features, you would be well advised to choose three for a fifteen mark question

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Anecdotes bring topic to life and add human interest/personal slant to topic/engage the reader in topic that may otherwise be dull.
2. Quotations add weight and make writing more impressive/add interest.
3. Descriptions bring scenes to life/draw readers in.

Sample Answer:

The aspect of Marlowe's writing which I found most appealing was the use of anecdotes. The topic – cats – is one which not everybody would find interesting, but Marlowe gives the subject a personal slant with her diverting tales of Spike sabotaging her work by walking across the computer keyboard or leaping with excitement when he believes his owner is in a mood to play with him. Human interest is added by the stories about the people associated with the various cats, from the Arabic teacher who shocks Marlowe by not believing cats capable of thought, to the stern administrator revealed as more likeable because she is spotted buying cat food, and the visitors whose merit or otherwise is gauged by their interactions with Spike. These amusing little narratives bring the piece to life and keep the reader engaged from start to finish.

As well as the anecdotes, another feature of Marlowe's style I enjoyed was the liberal scattering of quotations and artistic references. Each one is interesting and relevant and cleverly linked to the topic. For example, Marlowe draws a connection between herself and the eighth-century cat-owning monk by saying that while he had real mice in his workplace and she only has a computer mouse in hers, both are the focus of their respective cats' distracting hunts. The quotations from an impressive variety of literary figures and references to cats in famous works of art add weight to Marlowe's argument and make us realise just how popular cats are!

TIP: Remember that you are required to comment on each of the stylistic features you choose. This means explaining why you found them effective.

Finally, Marlowe's vivid and detailed descriptions of her cat bring the animal to life for us and draw us into her world by helping us to visualise the various scenarios, such as the way 'Spike's haunches quiver as he prepares to leap' on unsuspecting birds outside her apartment. Spike is presented as a likeable creature with an affinity for his owner's company. We can almost see him performing his 'celebratory leaps' of delight at the prospect of playtime. The onomatopoeic word 'gurgling' is a striking and unusual way to describe the sound a cat makes when pleased, but it is another example of Marlowe's ability to portray her beloved pet in an evocative and memorable way.

All in all, I found this to be a charming, entertaining and interesting account of an owner's love for her pet.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Note: Read the passage carefully. What are the characteristics attributed to cats by the author and others?

Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point. In this case, as there are two images, it would be sensible to write two paragraphs on each. You do not have to do this, of course. The most important thing is to deal with both images, but not necessarily equally.

You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

Image 1
(i) Comforting: peaceful scene/cat looks blissful/serene.
(ii) Close connection to humans: girl holding cat close, like child.

Image 2
(i) Predatory instincts: like Spike on balustrade.
(ii) Make themselves at home wherever they are/find best spots.

Sample Answer:

I believe the images accompanying this text effectively capture many of the characteristics attributed to cats by Marlowe and others.

The first image is an excellent portrayal of the sense of comfort that cats can bring their owners. The cat in this peaceful scene looks almost blissful with his head thrown back, his eyes closed and what can only be described as a contented smile on his face. The young girl looks similarly serene and happy as she holds her pet on her lap. Her eyes look somewhat heavy and unfocused, as if she is lost in a pleasant daydream or feeling drowsy. In the passage, Marlowe says that having a cat 'sitting in teapot mode at one's side' makes reading a book more pleasurable, and she also claims she sleeps better when Spike is 'curled up at the foot of the bed'. Although Marlowe confesses that she does not know why this is so, the painting in Image 1 appears to support her contention that simply being close to a resting cat is a deeply relaxing experience.

Another aspect of cats' natures which Marlowe stresses is the connection between them and humans. She says her cats pick up on her changing moods and react accordingly. Spike is so in tune with her emotions that he leaps and gurgles with delight when she is cheerful. For her part, she takes note of the cues given off by his behaviour too: she says she has 'second thoughts' about a visitor Spike dislikes. This closeness between pet and owner is evident in Image 1 also. The girl cradles the cat on her lap almost as she would a baby, her arms wrapped protectively around it. Her pet basks in this loving attention and surrenders completely to her embrace. The colours in the painting add to the sense of unity between animal and human. The white areas of the cat's fur blend into the white fabric of the girl's dress, the gold detailing is echoed in the gold highlights in the cat's fur, and the girl's dark hair matches the darker parts of the cat's coat. The bond between cats and humans is beautifully portrayed in this charming picture.

TIP: You must support your point with detailed reference to the image.

The second image shows a different side to cats. Steinlen's version is far less cuddly than Renoir's, and exudes an air of predatory menace as he sits atop the balustrade. His ears are pricked and his narrow, slanting, yellow eyes appear fixed on something in front of him. This reminds us of Spike stalking the sparrows and doves that 'cavort in the magnolia trees' and are sometimes unwise enough to land on the balustrade outside the writer's apartment. Steinlen's cat has none of the relaxed serenity of Manet's. Looking at this cat's face, it is easy to see why Victor Hugo likened petting a cat to petting a tiger!

TIP: Always read any information given about the images. In this case, the names of the artists and the paintings are given.

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The cat in Image 2 also reflects the ability of cats to make themselves at home wherever they are and to consider that they own that space. The cat's hind leg dangles over the edge of the balustrade and despite his watchful eyes, he appears poised and confident. In the passage, Marlowe tells us that Spike walks across her computer keyboard when she is working, sleeps at the foot of her bed, was pleased to see what he clearly considered 'his' furniture arrive at their new apartment, and decides which guests he approves of and which he does not. It is easy to imagine the cat that dominates the frame in Image 2 dominating any household in the same way.

TIP: You must refer to the passage when explaining why the image is appropriate.

There are other aspects of cats' characteristics which neither image reflects, but then it may not be possible to capture the essence of such a creature in only two pictures, no matter how good they are. As Marlowe says, cats are ultimately 'a mystery that eludes us'.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION B (50)

Note: This question asks you to explain two things:

1. What you find fascinating about the place.
2. Why you would like to go there.

You could be flexible with the truth here and talk about a place you have actually visited. That would allow you to describe it in more detail, possibly, than if you had never been there. Of course, you would have to pretend you hadn't been there at all!

Alternatively, think about your interests and how they might influence your desire to visit a certain place. For example, if you were very interested in nature and wildlife, you might have seen places on the David Attenborough series which appealed to you.

Whatever you decide, make sure you have several good reasons for wanting to go there. Obviously your writing will be more convincing if you genuinely want to visit the place, so give the matter some serious thought.

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B.

1. What <u>form</u> should this task take?
This is a feature article for a magazine, so you could approach it in a number of different ways. It could be personal, persuasive, informative, discursive, humorous, etc.

2. What should the <u>content</u> be?
Again, this is very much up to you but remember that you are trying to make your chosen place sound fascinating. There are many reasons it can be fascinating, of course. Don't feel you have to be limited to places of great natural beauty.

3. Who is my <u>audience</u>?
This is a feature article for a magazine, so the audience is the general public.

4. What <u>register</u> should I use?
You should try to write persuasively, and give descriptive details about your chosen place.

Sample Answer:

On a recent visit to the doctor's surgery, I picked up a travel magazine from the stack on the waiting room table, and flicked through it in a rather desultory fashion. It featured the usual places that tourists flock to each year: coastal towns with the obligatory golden beaches stretching for miles, cities where visitors are assured they will be able to shop until they drop, and ski resorts boasting lively après-ski nightlife as well as the usual variety of skiing and snowboarding options. I'm sure these destinations would be hugely attractive to most people, but they do not appeal to me at all. Why? It's quite simple. My dream is to travel to a place that is so different to all of these popular spots that it would most certainly not feature in a travel magazine. And if the tourist traps I read about in the magazine left me cold, then my dream destination would leave me even colder. About thirty degrees below freezing, in fact.

My interest in Antarctica began when I was around twelve years of age. An uncle gave me a copy of 'An Unsung Hero', the story of Tom Crean. From the moment I started reading, I was hooked. The challenges Crean and his fellow explorers faced were astonishing, yet they tackled them all with admirable stoicism and determination, bravely risking their lives in pursuit of their goal. Tom Crean became my hero, and I began to dream of following in his footsteps. I read every book about the topic I could lay my hands on, and was glued to the David Attenborough series 'Frozen Planet' each time it appeared on the documentary channels. I couldn't get enough of this frozen wilderness, and the more I learned the more I yearned to go there.

Antarctica really is like nowhere else on earth. The first record of any human setting foot on its shores is of a whaler who landed there in 1895. He wasn't just the first human, but the first land mammal! While Antarctica is teeming with wildlife, all if it is aquatic or airborne for most of the time. It is the last unspoiled nature reserve; a continent over five million square miles in size and home to dozens of species of penguin, seal, whale and dolphin, to name but a few. I'm willing to bet that even if you don't think you know much about Antarctica, you know the story of the emperor penguins' long march to the inland breeding colonies and almost unbelievable survival through the long, dark winter there while incubating the precious eggs. Imagine what it would be like to see these birds in the flesh, waddling in their rather awkward pomposity on the ice, then slipping into the water and vanishing in a burst of speed and grace. Having watched the documentaries, though, I fear I might be guilty of stuffing the orphaned penguin chicks into my jacket and trying to smuggle them home! I don't think I have the makings of a good research scientist. One minute I'm on the edge of my seat hoping the penguin will escape the hungry leopard seal, the next I'm praying that the leopard seal will escape the killer whale, then hoping the killer whale catches enough seals to feed its calf. That dramatic cycle of life and death is a large part of what makes wildlife watching in Antarctica so utterly compelling.

I don't know if I'll ever realise my dream to go to Antarctica, as few people are given permission to travel there in order to limit the impact visitors might have on the environment. However, that's part of what makes the place so fascinating. In an age when our every footstep on city streets is captured on CCTV and when people are in almost constant contact with one another, this unpopulated continent with its unforgiving climate and austere beauty exerts a powerful attraction on me, one that grows stronger with each passing year.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (i) **(15)**

Note: This question requires you to read through the whole extract and focus on the responses of the people on the ground below. Where is the first mention of a reaction to the sight of the man above? Did everybody react the same way? Etc.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Mixture of awe, incredulity and puzzlement: 'trick of the light', 'joke'/nobody saw rope.
2. Urgency: emergency services rushing to scene.
3. People united in compulsion to watch/awe: 'cops and watchers' are hushed, 'no chance they could pull away'.

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Sample Answer:

The initial reaction to the sight of the tightrope walker seems to have been a mixture of awe, incredulity and puzzlement. A 'hush' fell on those who saw him high above and they tried to make sense of what they were seeing. Some mistrusted their own eyes, considering it a 'trick of the light' or an 'accident of shadowfall', while others wondered if it was not so much a trick of the light as a trick designed to fool them all: some sort of 'perfect city joke'. As puzzlement and uncertainty turned to confirmed sighting of a man a hundred and ten storeys above them, people tried to work out what reason he could have for being up there and speculated that he may be some sort of worker whose job entailed standing on the edge of the high building. Nobody in the watching crowd seems to have guessed his real purpose.

TIP: Short quotes, woven into the fabric of the sentence, help to support the points being made.

Not everybody responded with interest, however. Some people 'ignored the fuss' and got on with their daily life, hurrying on their way and 'refusing the prospect of a gawk'. They were not the only ones unimpressed by the situation. Another group of people was less concerned with the mystery surrounding this man than with his safety. Emergency services rushed to the scene and there was a sense of urgency and anxiety as policemen, firemen and security guards raced to reach Petit.

TIP: Try to link your paragraphs whenever possible. It helps your answer to flow smoothly.

When Petit finally revealed his intention by producing a long thin bar and preparing to step out onto the cable at his feet, all of the watchers were united in their eager anticipation and compulsion to watch the unfolding spectacle. Emergency personnel and passers-by all fell silent and a hush descended. Whatever was to happen next, they were inextricably caught up in the drama and there was 'no chance they could pull away now'. The thrill and excitement they had felt in the lead-up to this moment is captured in the phrase 'the waiting had been magical', but now the crowd below had to see what the result would be.

TIP: The highlighted words answer the question by detailing the responses to the appearance of the tightrope walker.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: This question does not require you to refer to the written text in your answer, although you are of course free to do so. Your main focus should be the three images and what aspects of the event they capture.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. This is easy to do in this case as you are talking about three images. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Determination, focus, strength, set expression on face, slightly dwarfed by coils of cable.
2. Sense of scale, height, solitary nature of walk, danger.
3. All sorts of people/all ages united in their fascination, mystery highlighted by the fact we cannot see what they are looking at/squinting, concerned because of height and danger.

Sample Answer:

I believe **Image A** captures Philippe Petit's mindset before he embarks on his perilous tightrope walk. His expression is one of determination and focus. His mouth is in a tight line which gives the impression that his jaw may be clenched as he concentrates on the task ahead. There is a slight frown creasing his brow and his gaze is fixed somewhere other than on the cameraman. He seems to be completely absorbed in his own thoughts and not even to notice the photographer. He is dwarfed somewhat by the massive coils of cable he carries over his shoulder, but he is leaning forward as he walks which indicates that he is intent on getting to his destination. Overall, this picture shows a strong, purposeful man who looks set to achieve his goal.

Image B highlights Petit's vulnerability and isolation as he stands alone on the thin wire stretched between the towers. He appears a tiny figure as he embarks on his solitary walk. Petit is positioned in the top third of the picture, which means that the greater part of the photograph is taken up by the view of the city far below and we see just how high above it all Petit is. The blue haze surrounding Petit blurs the division between sky and land and gives the whole scene a slightly surreal air. However, what is clear is how dangerous the tightrope walk is. The ground is so far beneath Petit that a slip would mean certain death.

TIP: You should discuss the images in some detail, just as you would a written text.

Image C turns the focus away from Petit and onto the watching crowd. Young and old, men and women, all are united in their fascination as they stare at the man high above. The fact that we cannot see what they are looking at adds a sense of mystery and suspense to the picture. Some people are grimacing slightly, and all look a little concerned. It is obvious that they appreciate the danger inherent in what Petit is doing. The majority of the people appear to be squinting slightly as if trying to focus on something that is difficult to make out. This shows how high above them Petit is: he is not easily visible to the naked eye.

TIP: Try to link your paragraphs whenever possible. It makes your answer flow more smoothly.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (iii) (20)

Note: Although you are only asked to identify and comment on three features, you would be well advised to choose four for a twenty mark question.

Sample Plan:

Use a separate paragraph for each new point. You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Descriptive details set the scene: Paragraphs 4 and 5 in particular.
2. Colourful language/no clichés.
3. Creation of authentic atmosphere/drama/focus on the audience.
4. Contrast between short and long sentences: short, choppy sentences create sense of tension/add drama.

Sample Answer:

The first aspect of McCann's writing style which struck me was his wonderful use of descriptive details to set the scene. McCann focuses on the aspects of New York City that might not appear hugely important at first glance but which are wonderfully evocative and bring the city to life for us. For example, instead of just telling us that a bus pulled in, McCann says that it 'sighed down into a pot hole'. He also mentions a 'flying chocolate wrapper [touching] against a fire hydrant'. As people hurry to work there are the sounds of briefcases rubbing against trousers and umbrellas clinking on the footpath. These seemingly irrelevant sights and sounds are effective because they are part and parcel of everyday life in the city and we can easily relate to them.

TIP: If you have to change a word in a quote in order for it to make sense in the context of your sentence, then put the replacement inside square brackets: [ ]

Another reason McCann's writing is so impressive is that he uses colourful and unusual language in his descriptions. This makes the piece fresh and interesting. He says that the revolving doors of buildings 'pushed quarters of conversation out into the street'. The phrase 'quarters of conversation' is far more powerful than the more usual clichéd phrases such as 'snippets of conversation' because it is different and therefore makes us focus on the words and think about their meaning. Similarly, when describing the fire engines pulling into the plaza, McCann writes that the 'redblue dazzled the glass'. The neologism 'redblue' perfectly captures the flashing lights of the emergency services and is striking because of its originality.

TIP: A neologism is a new word coined by the writer.

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McCann's ability to create atmosphere makes this extract very appealing. He chooses to focus on the crowd's reactions to Petit rather than on Petit himself, and his portrayal of these people adds authenticity to the piece and engages the reader in the unfolding drama of the tightrope walk. The variety of onlookers is perfectly captured in the list of their occupations: 'Lawyers. Elevator operators. Doctors. Cleaners' and so on. By switching between professional people and manual labourers, McCann shows us how this event united the watchers in this 'tight little theatre of men and women'. Even the emergency services personnel become one with the expectant crowd when Petit begins to move: 'a new hush settled over the cops above and the watchers below'. It is easy for the reader to imagine and even share in 'the rush of emotion' that ripples through the crowd as we have become as involved in their experience as they have become in Petit's.

The rhythm of this piece varies between long, descriptive sentences and short, choppy, sometimes fragmented sentences. This effectively captures the tension and drama of the scene. In the final paragraphs, for example, the long sentences describing the moment when Petit begins to move draw out the suspense of those last seconds and allow us to share in the watchers' 'rush of emotion' as he raises and tests his balancing pole. Because the sentence goes on for so long, it is almost as if we, like those looking up from below, are holding our breath in anticipation. The penultimate sentence takes up an entire paragraph and the tension thus created is suddenly released by the simple, three-word final sentence: 'Out he went'.

TIP: Use verbs to show the effect of the feature of style you are discussing.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION B (50)

Note: The suggestions given are a great help and you would be well advised to read them carefully and consider which ones you might use. It would be unlikely that you would get to discuss all of them in a short writing task.

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B.

1. What <u>form</u> should this task take?
This is a talk.

2. What should the <u>content</u> be?
You should explore the reasons that we are still fascinated by mystery in books, films etc. Use examples when possible to support the points you are making. (Remember that your examiner's frame of reference may not be the same as your own, so try to use at least some fairly popular examples!)

3. Who is my <u>audience</u>?
Your audience is your fellow students, specifically those who are interested enough in reading to be members of the School Book Club. That gives you freer rein to discuss literature than you might have with a wider audience.

4. What <u>register</u> should I use?
You will be using the language of argument and persuasion here to win the listeners over to your point of view. As it is a talk, you can be a little more casual in your approach than you would be in a speech, but don't forget that the examiner is your audience too. Avoid slang, text-speak or bad language. This is your chance to impress the examiner with your command of English.

Sample Answer:

I want you all to use your imaginations for a moment. Let's pretend that this door here doesn't lead to the janitor's storeroom but actually opens into an alternate universe. If you choose to go through the door, you will see countless brutal murders, incredible cruelty, people in anguish and despair, and any number of situations so tense and frightening that they will haunt your dreams for weeks to come. Would you like to go through that door? I see a lot of you are shaking your heads. I don't blame you. Yet most – if not all – of you choose to enter such a world over and over again. Every time you pick up a mystery novel or go to the cinema to see films like the hugely successful 'Runner Runner', you are plunging headfirst into such a world. I'm sure there are a few of you who would argue that you stick to romance or comedy, but even those are centred around a mystery. Will the couple work through their problems and get back together? Will the kids get the house cleaned up and the evidence of the party hidden before their parents arrive home? Whatever the genre, there is almost always an element of mystery in our favourite novels, films or television series.

TIP: Remember that this is a talk, not just an opinion piece. Show awareness of your audience.

The question is why do we love mystery? What makes us put ourselves through the tension, the suspense and the heartbreak time and time again? I think it is because these scenarios help us to work out how we might act in these various dilemmas and in this way we can be better prepared to cope with the social dilemmas in our rather more mundane existence. Sure, these fictional situations are usually wildly different to our own lives, but when you get right down to it, the basics are the same. Almost always, we are presented with people who must be brave, decent, honourable and clever if they are to get to the bottom of things and reach the happy ever after. Almost always, they rely on good relationships with colleagues, friends or family if they are to succeed. That is as true of the 'Harry Potter' books as it is of 'The Lord of the Rings' trilogy or the Stieg Larsson series. I'm sure that if you read those books or even watched those films, you identified with the protagonists and wondered, along with them, what was the best course of action to take.

TIP: Examples support the point being made.

Mystery allows us to experience all the thrills and spills of these situations while remaining safe in the knowledge that whatever happens, we will be alive at the end of it all. We can also be reasonably confident that in this fictional world good will triumph over evil and justice will prevail. There is something very reassuring about this, of course, as it is a much neater package than our real lives. It doesn't matter if the protagonist makes mistakes; chances are it will be all right in the end. We can learn from their mistakes, but no harm comes to us, of course.

Mysteries are a like a roller-coaster ride, and they can be hugely exhilarating as well as emotionally challenging if we allow ourselves to be carried away by them. I, for one, am more than willing to strap myself in, hold on tight and be swept off into the unknown. Will you join me? Who knows, we might even learn something along the way!

TIP: Try to make it clear your talk is coming to an end, but avoid saying something formal like 'Thank you for listening'. That would be a bit stilted and formal for a talk like this, which is aimed at your fellow students after all.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (i) **(15)**

Note: The word 'impression' tells you that this is a question about character. Make sure that your plan contains a number of words to describe character and that you have evidence to support each point.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Forward, irritating, nosey, not put off by rebuffs.
2. Perceptive, observant, insightful: 'it's written all over your face'/ 'The eyes are outside your head' etc.
3. Mysterious, indefinable: 'face seemed to slip', 'no shadow', 'vanished, left no trace'.

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Sample Answer:

My first impression of the old woman is that she is an irritating, overly-inquisitive, pushy person who forces her company on others. She takes the seat opposite Sarah despite Sarah's attempt to 'project belligerence or even menace'. Once seated, she begins to ask questions. As the writer says, 'She wasn't at all shy' and she ignores Sarah's attempts to 'put a fence up'. The way the old woman asks questions does not allow for any refusal to answer because she phrases them in such a way as to give the impression that she is merely seeking to confirm information already given: 'And what did you say your name was?' While asking a fellow passenger's name may be reasonable, asking their age and relationship status most certainly is not, particularly when no encouragement is given by the other party.

TIP: This is a brief summary of the points that will be developed in more detail throughout the answer.

However, it soon becomes clear that the old woman needs little information from Sarah as she is more than perceptive enough to form her own opinions. She tells Sarah that her future is 'written all over [her] face' and shrewdly guesses that the girl has risen early as her eyes show her tiredness. From this, the old woman deduces that Sarah has fled her home without letting anyone know and that her 'angelic' appearance hides an 'awful distance' and a 'coldness'. She shows great insight in surmising that Sarah's decision to leave was one she might yet regret and warns her that 'Everything has a consequence' and that she will someday have to ask herself if she did the right thing.

TIP: If you have to change a word in a quote in order for it to make sense in the context of your sentence, then put the replacement inside square brackets: [ ]

Although the old woman seems to see through Sarah's motivation for getting on the train that morning, she is less easily defined herself. There is an aura of mystery about her. In the opening paragraph we learn that even her age is not clear: 'a face where age surfaces and then recedes again'. Later on, when she is about to cut to the heart of Sarah's reason for travelling, the old woman's face appears 'to slip' and her features become loose and undefined before reassembling themselves. This makes us wonder what is her true expression and if she is capable of projecting a number of different appearances to suit her situation. This impression of someone who cannot easily be pinned down is reinforced in the penultimate paragraph when the old woman disembarks and seems to vanish without a trace, leaving no shadow and becoming 'light, air, dust'.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Tries to put her off by projecting unfriendliness/makes show of adjusting iPod/reading book etc.
2. Certain amount of politeness, doesn't want to be rude.
3. Unsettled by old woman's reading of her situation but remains aloof: bites lip, looks away abruptly.

Sample Answer:

I believe that Sarah's behaviour on the train shows her unhappiness that the old woman has chosen to sit opposite her and is attempting to engage her in conversation. Sarah clearly wants to be left alone and has tried her best 'to project belligerence or even menace' but to no avail. Sarah's next move is to try to show that she has no wish to chat and she does this by busying herself with her iPod and a book, and even by peeling an orange and staring out at the sky; anything rather than catch the old woman's eye. Her 'dead-eyed glaze' is unfriendly and is intended to discourage unwanted questions from the old woman.

TIP: Use short quotes, woven into the fabric of the sentence, to support your point.

Despite Sarah's attempts to 'put a fence up' to defend herself against the old woman's approaches, a conversation – albeit mostly one-way – ensues nonetheless. Sarah shows a degree of consideration towards the old woman in that she considers changing seats but does not do so in case it appears rude. The old woman's comments about the year Sarah was born and her surprise that there is no boyfriend on the scene show that the girl has at least answered direct questions, which proves that she is unwilling to be openly hostile to the old woman. When the old woman takes Sarah's hands in hers, Sarah does not put up a fight. Although the writer says that there was 'no way to reverse from this, or to pull back', Sarah could undoubtedly have shouted at the old woman to let go. That she does not do so shows Sarah's reluctance to be impolite to her pushy fellow passenger.

TIP: Make sure all your points are linked back to the question.

The old woman's guesses about Sarah's situation seem to unsettle the girl and she appears unhappy. She remains aloof and does not respond to the speculation but looks away quickly. Her agitation is shown in the fact that she bites her lower lip, but she still has no intention of allowing the other woman into her confidence. It is obvious that she dislikes the perceptive comments about her personal life and would prefer if the old woman minded her own business. Sarah may not be outwardly rude, but she is certainly not pleased to have to share the old woman's company for the duration of the journey.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (iii) (20)

Note: You are required to talk about content and style but you do not have to give equal treatment to both.

Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point. You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Credible details about the passengers.
2. Descriptions of the train itself help us to imagine the scene /sounds etc. Onomatopoeia – 'rumbling', personification in 'sullen'.
3. Descriptions of landscape 'image by image' give impression of movement.
4. Place names add authenticity and sense of journey through the country.

Sample Answer:

The first way in which Kevin Barry creates the experience of the train journey is through his credible description of the passengers who embark at the country station. Anyone who has ever travelled by train will recognise the behaviour of those who shuffle down the aisles and go through the motions of asking is a seat taken before sitting there anyway. Even the items the passengers carry on with them – 'phones, food, magazines – are typical, as is the wincing and groaning as they pull themselves on board and attempt to make themselves comfortable. It is easy for us to relate to the scene Barry depicts as it is so authentic in its detail.

It is not just the passengers that are described convincingly. The movement of the train itself is accurately conveyed through the onomatopoeic word 'rumbling', which makes us think both of the sound and the feeling of the wheels on the iron tracks. Barry also uses personification to great effect when he talks about the 'sullen build-up of momentum'. Of course the train cannot be sullen, but the word interests us because it is such an original way to describe a train and also because it gives us a sense of the atmosphere on board. We are led to believe that people are travelling because they have to rather than because they want to and there is a sense of resentment that they must share one another's company on this 'raw November' morning.

TIP: When you are commenting on the writer's style, think of the way you would approach an unseen poem. Try to talk about the language in some detail.

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Once the train is well underway, the idea of the landscape flashing past the windows is vividly portrayed in the descriptions of the sights that appear and disappear as the countryside is 'unpeeled image by image'. The ruins of houses, the birds and the trees of the countryside are replaced by the sights common to those parts of towns seen from a train: 'light industry, new building schemes, the health centre, an Aldi'. All of these details help us to visualise the rapidly changing landscape as viewed from the train window and enhance the realism of the journey Barry describes.

This sense of realism is further accentuated by the use of place names. The old woman comments on the Nenagh bypass which may seem a trivial detail but which serves to remind us of the train's progress through the country. Later Barry mentions North Tipperary, Clondalkin and finally Heuston, again enhancing our sense of the journey through the Irish countryside as the train travels north towards Dublin. Any reader who has ever taken a journey through Ireland by train will relate to the experience as described by Barry.

TIP: The final sentence links back to the question.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION B **(50)**

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B:

1. What form should this task take?
This is a diary entry. How it is laid out is not hugely important as there is scope within this type of task to approach it in a number of different ways. Generally, however, it is best (and easiest) to stick to a fairly conventional layout (see sample answer).

2. What should the content be?
You are Sarah, so you should reflect on events and talk about the impact they have had on you. Try to be imaginative about Sarah's reasons for leaving, but make sure to base as much as possible on the text. When talking about your meeting with the old woman, look for clues that tell you how Sarah feels about her, and consider Sarah's demeanour when she gets off the train.

3. Who is my audience?
A personal diary records the writer's thoughts and feelings and is not intended to be read by anyone else.

4. What register should I use?
The level of formality here is up to you. However, remember that it is difficult to be too correct, and easy to be too casual. As always, avoid text-speak, overuse of slang and abbreviations. Never use bad language. Don't focus on whether or not you would really be likely to write this sort of thing; focus on the fact that this is an opportunity for you to show the examiner how well you can write.

Thursday 14 November, 7.30 am

TIP: It is usual to give the date (and possibly the time) at the start of a diary entry. Note that the extract mentioned the passengers carrying 'raw November on the breath'.

Well, that's that. I'm sitting in Kent Station in the freezing cold, waiting for the Dublin train. I wonder if Mike has woken up yet and whether or not it has dawned on him that I've left. He'll work it out fast enough when he sees the note on the kitchen table. God knows, I dropped enough hints that I wanted to move on. He never picked up on them, though. Just smiled and said I sounded a bit tired and he'd make me a cup of tea, as if that would solve anything.

He thought we were so happy. It sickened me, in the end, to hear him talking to his family about 'our future'. I could never have a future with someone so unambitious. It was all well and good when we had just left school, but it became clear very early on that he'd have been content to live like that forever: him in his dead-end job and me picking up bits and pieces of work where I could.

TIP: It's up to you to decide why Sarah left, but the old woman in the extract does say that she is cold and distant.

If I tried to explain any of this to him, he'd just look puzzled and say we had it all going for us and that as long as we had each other we didn't need much else. No chance he'd ever have had the guts to leave his precious home town and try to make it in Dublin or London. I'm well rid of him. Slipping out quietly was the best way. I couldn't have dealt with his begging and pleading. I had made my mind up to go, so what would be the point of talking about it?

Thursday 14 November, 2.30 pm

Here in the hotel at last after the train journey from hell. It was fine until Mallow, but then an old woman barged into the seat opposite mine. I did my best to put her off but she was like Mike's Aunt Bridie: unstoppable once she was in full flow and wittering on about the dullest things imaginable.

That was bad enough, but then things became so strange that I'm shivering a little even thinking of it. She went oddly silent and stared at the ceiling as if she were reading something terrible that was written up there. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up, but there was nowhere to go, so I just sat there, frozen.

When she looked down again, the old hag stared right at me and started telling me all about myself. Honestly, I felt physically ill when I heard her accurately describing the way I left this morning and telling me that everything had a consequence. It was the first time I had a doubt that I had done the right thing. But then I pulled myself together. After all, I'm just looking after my own interests, and that's simply good sense. I know people might judge me for it, but I can't help that. They'll see in time that I was right. I don't need them anyway.

There goes the phone again. Another text from Mike – just as needy and frantic as all the others. He needs to face facts and realise it's over. I'm moving onwards and upwards and I don't need any dead weight holding me back.

TIP: There is no need to sign off at the end of a diary entry, although you can if you like. The same applies to the opening: you can write 'Dear Diary' if you wish.

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: You are free to agree or disagree with the statement given. However, it would be wise to remember that Seamus Heaney is a famous poet and, as such, likely to write and speak powerfully and evocatively about the places of his youth. As a general rule, it is best to be positive in your answer.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Cattle dealers – Heaney brings the drama of their deals to life.
2. Quietness of country roads – peaceful and safe.
3. Trip to the seaside – not clichéd description; wet footprints/clothes/gloomy.

Sample Answer:

I agree that a strong sense of the place and community in which Heaney grew up emerges from this interview. He brings the countryside and the people vividly to life for the reader through his sensitive and detailed descriptions.

TIP: Your opening sentence should make your position clear.

Heaney's depiction of the cattle dealers is particularly evocative. He recalls with affection the 'terrific theatre' that was the 'banter and the bidding and bargaining' of the sales. The detailing of the various dramatic gestures the men make as they try to outmanoeuvre one another really helps us to visualise the scene and draws us into the rural community Heaney recreates so effectively. We can almost see the dealers 'throwing up their hands' and pretending to walk away in an effort to negotiate a lower price.

As well as the lively cattle markets, Heaney also recalls the quieter aspects of rural life. He talks about his neighbours living 'a couple of fields away' and says that the road between their house and his had so little traffic that 'no more than a few locals on bicycles and the occasional horse and cart' would pass by daily. Heaney paints an attractive picture of a peaceful place where a neighbouring blind woman could walk on her own, safe in the knowledge that the few people on the road would be travelling slowly and would most likely know who they might encounter. From these details, we get a clear image of a rural idyll where nothing is hurried and where people are familiar with one another's routines.

TIP: Try to link your paragraphs whenever possible. It helps to show that your answer is planned and well-structured.

It is not just in the descriptions of rural life that a strong sense of place emerges, however. Heaney's recollections of a day at the seaside are ones to which I think all of us can relate. He avoids the clichéd 'list of the usual, expected activities' and instead tells of the rather gloomy and depressing atmosphere of an amusement arcade in which he has taken shelter from a shower. Details such as 'the wet footprints on the floor' and the feeling of coldness engendered by seeing people in their 'rained-on summer clothes' left me feeling as if I were there in person.

It is no surprise that a poet as accomplished as Heaney should be able to describe the places of his youth so powerfully even in such a short extract and could bring us with him on a journey to his past.

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: The choice of images is completely up to you. There is no right or wrong answer here. All that is required is that you justify your choices by explaining clearly why they illustrate or complement the passage.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Cattle pen, men's hands grasping fence – represents the working men but does not mark them as individuals.
2. Family photographs – represents importance of early childhood.
3. Music sheets and pages of poetry – Rosie Keenan showed Heaney the importance of art.

Sample Answer:

The first image I would choose is a photograph of a cattle pen with men's hands shown grasping or resting on the top rail of the fence. The men's hands should be rough and calloused from work, and if jacket sleeves are shown, they should be made of heavy tweed, worn and even slightly frayed around the edges.

TIP: Describe the image in enough detail for the reader to visualise the important aspects of it.

The reason I would choose this image is that I feel it would represent the cattle dealers Heaney describes in his first answer. The men's hands are an important part of the bargaining process as they slap them together to seal a deal or throw them in the air to indicate that a price is far too high. I would show the hands rather than the faces because these men are not presented as individuals but rather as a group of traders who are part of Heaney's past yet from whom he feels a slight disconnect. Although he is familiar with the men and does not feel left out of the 'terrific theatre' of their trade, he is nonetheless 'set apart' by his education and his ambition to do something other than work as a cattle dealer.

TIP: Justify your choice by referring closely to and/or quoting briefly from the extract.

The second image I feel would illustrate this text well would be a wall filled with family photos. This is a common sight in many Irish homes, and provides a visual record of important moments in the family's life. I think it would be in keeping with the autobiographical nature of this extract for the photos to be from the 1940s and 1950s so that they would reflect the time period in which Heaney grew up. Heaney says that 'early-in-life experience' was central to his development as a writer, and his recollections of moments from his childhood bear this out. He also speaks proudly and fondly of his parents: his father who had 'a touch of the artist about him' and his music-loving mother. Therefore, I think it would be appropriate to have an image representing close family ties and childhood memories.

TIP: It is reasonable to expect that you would have an idea of Heaney's age as he is such a famous Irish poet.
The 's' in both cases is because the decades are plural, so no apostrophe is needed.

The final image I would choose is a photograph of sheets of Irish dance music scattered on a table along with handwritten pages of Heaney's poetry. The sheet music should be old and yellowing and should show evidence of much handling. I think this picture would reflect the importance music played in developing Heaney's artistic sensibilities. He tells us that the blind musician Rosie Keenan would often bring her violin when calling to their house and turn the visit 'into a little home concert' filled with Irish jigs, reels and songs. Even more surprisingly, strains of Rosie Keenan's piano playing could be heard by those passing her house in the middle of the day: a time when most adults would have been out working. The influence this had on Heaney is shown when he says that Rosie Keenan 'made that musical dimension a living thing' for him, and was the person 'who first made time and space in our lives for art'.

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TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Note: When you are asked for your impression of a person, you are required to talk about their character as shown in the extract.

Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point. You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Sensitive, observant, good understanding of parents.
2. Open person, good communicator – wants readers to understand exactly what he means.
3. Loves art, stresses importance of it in his early life.

Sample Answer

The first and strongest impression I formed of Seamus Heaney is that of a sensitive and observant man who has a great understanding of those around him. When he is discussing his father, Heaney does not simply talk of him as a cattle dealer but as someone who 'regarded himself as more lord than labourer' and had 'a touch of the artist about him'. He also describes his father's pride in his work and his view that it was somehow 'a calling'. Heaney sees aspects of his father's character that a less astute observer might have missed. He digs below the surface when describing the people he grew up with: he notices the 'sweet atmosphere' in the house and the 'great ease' between his mother and her old school friend and neighbour Rosie Keenan. It is clear from these examples that Heaney is an insightful and empathetic person.

TIP: The topic sentence makes the point of the paragraph. This will be explained and supported with quotation from and reference to the extract throughout the rest of the paragraph.

As well as showing an astute awareness of the characters of those around him, Heaney also comes across as an open person who is keen to communicate his thoughts with the interviewer and, by extension, the readers. The tone of his answers is positive and inclusive throughout the extract. When he is talking about his father's pride in his work, Heaney explains it clearly and concisely, but then says 'To put it another way…' before explaining that his father viewed dealing as a calling. By rephrasing the point, Heaney shows that he wants to make sure we understand exactly what he means. Similarly, when he is recounting the influence of early-in-life experience on his writing, Heaney uses similes to make his idea easily understood, comparing it to a culture at the bottom of a jar and a hatching egg.

TIP: Try to link your paragraphs whenever possible.

Finally, and perhaps unsurprisingly, another impression of Heaney that emerges strongly from this extract is his love and appreciation of art. He recalls the first time he wrote something that was real and meaningful: a description of the gloomy atmosphere of a seaside amusement arcade during a summer shower. Even though he was young, Heaney realised that writing about something he had actually experienced 'had a different feel' and he knew that he was 'on the right track'. For a boy of his age to regard writing well as being 'on the right track' is significant and shows the importance of art in his life. Similarly, Heaney discusses the role that music played in developing his artistic sensibilities. He says that Rosie Keenan's impromptu concerts in his family home 'made the musical dimension a living thing' for him, and he says that with hindsight she was the first person who made 'time and space in our lives for art'.

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Text 1 – Question B **(50)**

Note: As always, read the question carefully. Your chosen career must be one which has allowed you to achieve public recognition and great success. It might be a good idea to use your own interests or hobbies as a basis for this piece as that will make your writing more realistic. For example, do you participate in sports? Do you sing or play a musical instrument? Are you keen on science? There are many possibilities here, so try to choose something that really does matter to you and with which you have been involved since you were young. This last point is important because the question also requires you to talk – like Heaney – about the experiences and influences in your youth which contributed to your later success.

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B:

1. What form should this task take?
This is an interview. The interviewer's questions should be quite short and the interviewee's answers much longer.

2. What should the content be?
You should have at least two questions and answers. An anecdote or two would help to bring the piece to life. The interview with Seamus Heaney may give you some ideas for questions.

3. Who is my audience?
This interview will be read by anyone with an interest in your chosen career.

4. What register should I use?
Your approach could be serious, humorous, narrative, discursive or a mixture of all of these.

TIP: You can write a brief introduction if you like. It makes it easier to abbreviate the interviewer and interviewee's names later on if you have given them in full in the introduction.

Sample Answer:

In this month's episode of 'Before They Were Famous', Colm Dennehy talks to recent Nobel Prize winner Rory Kennedy about his formative years.

CD: Good morning, Rory, and thank you for taking the time to come into the studio this morning. Your breakthrough with cold fusion ushered in a new era of safe and cheap energy, and has brought you incredible fame and fortune. However, we're not here today to talk about the discovery; we're here to talk about the man behind it.

I think it's fair to say that many people are surprised to learn that you do not come from a scientific background at all. Can you tell me a little about your parents?

RK: My father was a full-time farmer and my mother worked part-time in the local bakery. So no, I didn't exactly come from a scientific background, but my parents placed huge emphasis on their children's education. Every evening after dinner, no matter how tired they were, they made time to check up on our homework and help us out if we were struggling with anything. They never pretended to have all the answers, but they did show us that the answers could be found if you stuck at it. I think that's what made me so tenacious as a scientist; to this day I find it almost impossible to give up on a project. I hear my father's voice in the back of my head, quoting that old chestnut about success being '99 per cent perspiration and 1 per cent inspiration'. It might be annoying, but it's true!

CD: You went to a small, local secondary school, and you have been quoted before as saying that the facilities there were fairly basic. Did that make your study of science subjects more difficult?

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RK: Not really. Don't get me wrong: we'd have loved a brand-new lab with all the bells and whistles, but we had an exceptionally dedicated science teacher who was a genius at making do and who encouraged all the pupils in his class to take science out of the realm of books and exams and into the real world. He helped my friends and me with our entry for the Young Scientist competition – we came up with a way to harness the energy generated by the breakdown of material in compost heaps – and winning first prize for our invention gave me huge confidence and made me believe I had what it took to make a future for myself in scientific research.

TIP: Don't fall into the trap of saying 'my friends and I' here. Break it up: 'he helped my friends and he helped me'. 'He helped my friends and me'.

CD: When and why did you decide to make the production of low-cost, safe energy your goal?

RK: Growing up on a farm and being part of a rural community meant that I saw first-hand the effects of climate change. I remember with awful clarity the devastation that a series of harsh winters, late springs and wet summers wreaked on our farm. My father lost his entire herd because there was no fodder available in this country and the cost of shipping it in from overseas was beyond his means. The farm had been in the family for four generations, and I'll never forget the look of despair on my father's face when he thought he'd lose it all. He just managed to hang on and thankfully the following year was a bit better, but I resolved there and then to devote my future career to seeking out some way of lessening our reliance on climate-destroying sources of energy. Happily, I was successful and the rest is history!

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: You could focus on the planetary emergency on its own or you could bring in our failure to deal with it.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Effect on people – livelihoods, homes ruined by drought/flooding/rising sea levels.
2. Animals pushed to extinction – 'web of life' frayed.
3. Urgent situation but not enough being done by major powers.

Sample Answer:

Al Gore makes a strong case for the idea that we are 'confronting a planetary emergency'. He outlines the effect on humanity and other creatures as well as pointing out our failure to face up to and tackle this 'inconvenient truth'.

TIP: This brief introduction touches on the three points that will be dealt with in this answer.

According to Gore, there is hardly a place in the world that is not being negatively affected by climate change. Some countries are struggling with 'massive droughts' which destroy farmers' livelihoods, while at the same time millions of people in other countries are forced to evacuate their homes due to flooding and rising sea levels. Whole cities around the globe are threatened by storms and wildfires. Extremes of heat and cold have killed tens of thousands.

It is not just people who are suffering the effects of our rapidly-changing planet. Al Gore tells us that we are destroying our forests and driving an increasing number of species into extinction. This destruction of the world around us is akin to waging a war on our own planet and is, Gore claims, putting our very survival at risk. We depend on 'the web of life' but are wiping it out at such a rate that we will be eradicated with it.

TIP: Try to link your paragraphs whenever possible.

Gore makes it clear that the 'planetary emergency' is exacerbated by our reluctance to recognise the seriousness of the situation and take steps to remedy it. He says we must act 'boldly, quickly and decisively' if we are to have any hope of avoiding the worst of the consequences. However, he believes that the two largest offenders in terms of CO_2 emissions – the United States and China – are not doing enough to tackle the problem. These major world powers have an important role to play in helping to make life on earth sustainable.

TIP: 'Exacerbated' means 'made worse or more severe'. It is important to use a rich and varied vocabulary in your answers.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (ii) **(15)**

Note: The choice of quotation is up to you. There is no right or wrong answer here. However, if you choose a quotation that genuinely made a strong impression on you, you are likely to get a better mark than if you simply choose one at random.

When answering this question think of the way you approach your unseen poetry. Be prepared to discuss the quote in some detail, focusing on your personal response.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Idea of team work to achieve meaningful results is a good one.
2. Simple language, powerful message.
3. Represents people from the developing world/ordinary people.

Sample Answer:

The quotation which made the strongest impression on me is the African proverb that says, 'If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together'.

The first thing that struck me favourably about this quotation was the idea that endurance and long-term results depend on team work. This is especially relevant in the context of Al Gore's argument as he is adamant that in order for us to have a positive influence on our future on this planet, we need to work together. Humankind has for too long been focused on competition and that is the reason for our 'burning massive quantities of coal, then oil and methane' in the race to have the latest and the greatest in industry and technology. But now we must pull together in the long journey to repair the damage we have done to our planet.

TIP: Justify your choice in the context of the passage.

The second thing that appealed to me about this proverb was the simplicity of its message and the straightforward, uncomplicated language used. It is no less powerful for that, in fact it is more striking because it is so easily understood. There is no avoiding the truth contained within those words. The repetition of the word 'go' drives home the idea that we are all on a journey. The proverb doesn't tell us what we must do, but rather offers us possibilities by using the phrase 'If you want to go…' I like this as it puts the onus on us to make the right choice and at the same time gives us hope that we can still make a difference if we form an alliance. This simple proverb is both instructive and positive and is one which I will easily remember.

Finally, I liked the fact that Al Gore chose to use a popular African saying in his speech. The rest of his quotations are from prophets, poets, authors and playwrights but this proverb is the voice of the ordinary people, which I think is appropriate as the message is that each and every one of us – not just scientists and politicians – has a role to play in our future. I noticed that Gore consciously chose quotations representing different nationalities but this was the only one from the developing world. I thought this was a nice touch as it is the developing world that has gained least from all the 'progress' made by the burning of fossil fuels over the last hundred years or so, but has arguably suffered most from the devastating effects of climate change.

TIP: Each paragraph must show evidence of personal response as you were asked which quotation made the greatest impact on you.

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TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Note: Speech writing uses the language of persuasion and/or argument. What are the key features of these language genres? Remember to comment on the effectiveness of each feature you identify.

Sample Plan:

The question clearly requires you to write four points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point. You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Inclusive language – 'we' – engaging, puts responsibility on all of us.
2. Quotations/illustrations lend force to argument and make it memorable.
3. Urgency of tone clear in language: 'emergency', 'threat to survival of civilisation' etc. Also, constant urging to move fast.
4. Rhetorical devices are persuasive.

Sample Answer:

One of the most effective features of Al Gore's speech is the use of inclusive language throughout. The personal pronouns 'we' and 'our' are used repeatedly and this has the effect of engaging the listeners and making it seem as if this speech is a conversation rather than a lecture. Al Gore does not distance himself from his audience by saying 'you' or 'they' but instead appears to take his share of the blame for what is happening to our planet. The result is that the audience is likely to feel that they are on the same side as the speaker and thus more inclined to agree with his point of view.

TIP: Use verbs such as 'engaging' to show the effect the feature of style has.

Gore also uses quotations and illustrations to great effect. The quotations are cleverly chosen from poets, playwrights and authors from a variety of countries and this gives the impression that Gore's argument is one which is supported by intelligent and learned people around the world. Further weight is added to Gore's case by his use of compelling and sobering illustrations. He says that millions of people have already 'been displaced by massive flooding in South Asia, Mexico and Africa' and that 'whole cities' are threatened by wildfires and storms. These examples are likely to make the audience realise the catastrophic effects of climate change and the danger it poses for everyone, everywhere.

TIP: This is the topic sentence. The rest of the sentences in this paragraph will develop this idea.

Another way in which Gore makes his argument convincing is by the urgency of his tone. His language is carefully chosen to create fear and concern in the audience. Phrases such as 'planetary emergency', 'threat to the survival of our civilisation', 'all this destruction' and 'wage war on the earth itself' are highly emotive and may well evoke a sense of panic in the listeners. This makes them more receptive to any solution Gore proposes to the dreadful scenario he has placed before them. Gore urges his audience to act quickly and stresses the 'urgency of making the right choice now' as we stand at this 'fateful fork' in our history. This is a powerful technique in speechwriting as the audience is led to believe that they must decide on a course of action immediately and while they are still under the influence of Gore's compelling argument.

TIP: Short quotes woven into the fabric of the sentence are more effective than entire sentences copied from the extract.

Gore's use of rhetorical devices in this speech is particularly impressive and is a common feature of effective speech writing. Repetition is used to drive home the points being made and to help them stick in the listener's mind. The word 'act' is used repeatedly and this motivates the audience to do something concrete about the problem of climate change. Another idea which is repeated is that of humans waging war on the planet. This is a clever use of imagery as it drives home the idea that climate change equates to violence, suffering and death. Similarly clever is the use of rhetorical questions towards the end of the speech. The language in these questions is emotive, forcing the audience to wonder if they have 'the moral courage' to save the planet for the next generation.

All in all, this is a most convincing speech and one which is likely to have a profound effect on all who hear or read it.

TIP: If you wish, you can include a brief conclusion.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION B (50)

Note: Take note of the dates given. You are writing this letter now, but are expressing your hopes for the future of planet Earth. The words 'planet Earth' may refer to the earth itself or to human civilization, or a mixture of both.

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B.

1. What form should this task take?
This is an open letter. That simply means it is a formal letter intended to be read by a wide audience.

2. What should the content be?
You should have two or three hopes for the future of the planet.

3. Who is my audience?
Your audience is anyone in the future who may read this letter.

4. What register should I use?
Your language should be reasonably formal as you do not know the people to whom you are writing. You are expressing your hopes for the future, so there will probably be an element of argument/persuasion as you explain why you feel this way.

Sample Answer:

No. 10, Main Street,
Mallow,
Co. Cork
6 June 2010

An open letter to future generations.

TIP: This is a standard way to begin an open letter.

If you are reading this, then at least my worst fears have not been realised. Planet Earth, and more specifically human civilisation, has survived to 2050 or beyond. However, I hope that human beings have done more than survive. I hope they have evolved beyond the rather selfish, short-sighted creatures they are in 2010.

I dream of a time when people realise that survival depends on living in harmony with the planet and not simply stripping it of all its resources in order to feed our immediate desires. Perhaps future generations will learn from our greed and our mistakes and will accept that we are stewards of the earth and have a duty to ensure that we can live in peace and harmony with both one another and with the natural world.

I know that in order for my dream to become a reality, people will have to make sacrifices. The lifestyles of those in the developed world are simply not sustainable. Nations will have to work together to agree on a policy of progress that will allow technological and industrial advances but at a slower pace and with more restrictions than is currently the case. For example, cars are being built nowadays that can far exceed any speed limits and that guzzle fossil fuels. These are nothing more than status symbols and, unfortunately, symbols of the shallow values of our time. I hope that in fifty years' time there will be greater investment in public transport and the common good, and less in instant gratification of selfish desires. By then, I am hopeful that people will have seen the wisdom in the words

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of the Roman politician and philosopher Cicero who said, 'To live long it is necessary to live slowly'. That is as true for humankind in general as it is for individuals.

My hope is that people will come to see that our only hope of survival lies in working together and giving up on the idea of artificial, political boundaries and the competition and aggression that those bring. Why could there not be a world in which people share knowledge readily and freely and help all countries to achieve a good standard of living for their inhabitants? The more stability there is in each country, the less chance there is of war and famine. At the moment, caring about the environment and the future is a luxury that only developed countries seem to be able to afford, not that they necessarily take advantage of that luxury.

TIP: Students often protest that there is no way they could have an appropriate quote to hand, but it is entirely possible to do so. Make a folder in your computer in which you keep quotes on topical issues such as the future, education, sport, friends and family and so on. They are all readily available on the internet. Get into the habit of using these in your homework during the year and by the time the exam comes around, there is an excellent chance you will be able to use them in your Comprehension Question B and Composition.

In conclusion, my wish for the future of this planet is that by 2050 it is populated by generous, far-sighted, selfless people who are united not only in their desire to ensure a better world for themselves and their descendants, but who are also united in their incredulity and disapproval when they are taught the history of humanity pre-2010: the story of a people who knew what they were doing to the planet but did not act on that knowledge. If this letter is some day used to show how backwards and barbarous people were in my time in that what I am expressing here is a utopian dream for my generation, then well and good.

Yours in hope,

Conal Walsh

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: Be sure to focus only on the aspects of Clarisse's character that appeal to you.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Curiosity, interest in Montag.
2. Philosophical, questioning approach to life.
3. Free-spirited and unusual.

Sample Answer:

One of the first things that struck me about Clarisse's personality was her enquiring mind and her interest in other people. She is not at all put off by Montag's rather glib answer to her first question about whether or not he reads any of the books he burns. His 'official slogan' and anti-book propaganda doesn't distract Clarisse from her purpose, which is to find out about the man rather than the job. She asks Montag a number of questions that make him feel as if he is being turned 'end on end'. I think her inquisitive nature and her determination to get to the bottom of things is admirable. She appears to care about Montag and asks him if he is happy – a question which he finds most disconcerting as it seems that he has not given the matter much thought up to this point. Clarisse's genuine interest in the people she meets makes her an intriguing and appealing character.

TIP: Make sure that every paragraph refers back to the question, either directly or indirectly.

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Clarisse's curiosity and sense of wonder about the world in which she lives makes her a philosopher in my eyes. She lives in a world where people are not encouraged to take the time to think – indeed her uncle was jailed for taking the time to drive slowly and look at the scenery – but she retains her desire to query what others accept at face value. Her conversation with Montag reveals a desire to establish some sort of moral or philosophical framework that would help to make sense of her world. In the course of their short walk she raises a number of topics such as love, happiness, history and the importance of taking time to talk and think things over. I imagine that a conversation with Clarisse would be invigorating and thought-provoking.

Clarisse's reluctance to accept the status quo and her gently rebellious nature are only part of what make her an attractive character. She is free-spirited, unusual and quirky. One moment she is asking searching questions and the next she is touching a flower under Montag's chin to see if he is in love. There is something rather sweet and childlike about her openness and innocence as she does this. It would be difficult to label Clarisse or pin her down in any way as she darts from topic to topic. I can't imagine anyone being bored in her company, whether or not they agreed with her or, like Montag, found themselves made 'quite irritable' by her habit of steering the conversation away from the rehearsed or the predictable. All in all, I think Clarisse is a most appealing and striking character.

TIP: Even in a fifteen mark answer it is important to link your paragraphs whenever possible.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: You should note the word 'interesting'. You are not asked which image you prefer, but rather which one interests you more.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Cover 1 is too obviously threatening and surreal.
2. Cover 2 allows for imagination.
3. Additional text in Cover 2 is enticing.

Sample Answer:

I found the cover on the right (Cover 2) far more interesting than the cover on the left (Cover 1). While Cover 1 is certainly eye-catching, it does not reward closer observation in the same way that Cover 2 does. Cover 1 depicts a surrealist scene in which a mutant hound and gun-toting human figure loom in the foreground against a backdrop of blood-red streets and skies. The sense of threat created by this image is immediate, but it is too obvious for my taste. It doesn't allow much room for the imagination. Also, it seems to indicate that the subject of the book is fantastical and unreal, which rather lessens the impact of the story in my mind. Surely the point is that we are meant to think this dystopian future is one which could – at least in part – come to pass if we are not careful?

TIP: 'Dystopia' is the opposite of 'utopia'. A dystopian future is an imagined one which is unpleasant, undesirable and frightening.

Cover 2, by contrast, is far more sober and restrained in its imagery. The only bright colour is the flames leaping from the small pile of burning books. However, I found this cover far more interesting than Cover 1, largely because it allows my imagination more free rein. The child is faceless, as are the black, silhouetted adults standing behind him. We see only their legs and lower torsos. All appear neatly dressed, as does the child. The formality and anonymity of the group gives the impression of coldness and a lack of humanity, and the effect of this is quite chilling.

It is not only the visual imagery in Cover 2 that makes it more appealing to me. Unlike Cover 1, which only gives the name of the book, Cover 2 entices us with a list of the characters above the title in much the same way that a film poster lists the principal actors. The effect of this is to make us wonder for a moment if they are real people and what

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role they play in this story. Similarly, the invitation to 'Read this uncensored version behind closed doors' is enticing. It makes us wonder why such secrecy is needed and cleverly blurs the line between fact and fiction. Cover 1, on the other hand, issues no such invitation to read, which is ironic considering the subject of the novel. I think that in the case of this book it is far more appropriate to draw readers in with words than with overly-dramatic visual imagery.

TIP: It is a good idea to link the covers back to the story and show how relevant or otherwise they are.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (iii) **(20)**

Possible points:
- Colourful/sensuous language.
- Effective/ineffective characterisation/dialogue.
- Striking/vivid images and symbols.
- Dramatic tension; sense of intimacy.
- Atmospheric setting; visual/cinematic features.
- Unconvincing/contrived scenario.

Note: Note the word 'and' in this question. Make sure you address both the dramatic and descriptive aspects of Bradbury's writing. You don't have to give both equal treatment.

Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point. You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Descriptions of Clarisse are wonderfully evocative.
2. Similes and metaphors used to great effect.
3. Drama created by intimacy/differences between characters.
4. Dialogue shows increasing tension.

Sample Answer:

One of the first aspects of Bradbury's writing style that caught my attention was his wonderfully evocative description of Clarisse. Although he only gives us a few details about her appearance and demeanour, those are enough to create a picture of an ethereal creature who fascinates both Montag and the reader. Her dress is white and her face is 'slender and milk-white'. The repetition of the word 'white' gives us the impression that Clarisse is an innocent, pure young girl, and this impression is reinforced throughout the piece. Bradbury makes her appear a child of nature when he has her standing looking at the autumn leaves swirling around her feet and rather touchingly using a dandelion to check if Montag is in love. It is through these little details that Bradbury succeeds in creating this otherworldly, enchanting character.

TIP: 'Ethereal' means delicate and almost too perfect for this world.

One of the things that I admired most about Bradbury's writing is his use of vivid imagery. In the second paragraph we read that Clarisse's face is like 'fragile milk crystal', echoing the descriptions in the first paragraph. However, Bradbury immediately expands on this with a wonderful metaphor comparing the light in her face to 'the strangely comfortable, rare, and gently flattering light of a candle'. I was surprised to realise that I knew next to nothing concrete about Clarisse – the colour or length of her hair, for example – yet I had no difficulty forming a mental picture of her based on Bradbury's description. The imagery used to describe Montag is equally effective, particularly the simile which likens his happiness to a mask that Clarisse has pulled away.

TIP: A level of personal response is appropriate as you were asked to give your view of Bradbury's style.

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At first glance this may not appear to be a dramatic piece, but Bradbury effectively creates a sense of tension by presenting us with two characters who appear to agree on little yet are drawn towards one another. The instant attraction is shown in the description of Clarisse regarding Montag with 'eyes so dark and shining and alive, that he felt he had said something quite wonderful'. However, as the two walk and talk, more and more differences emerge. Bradbury gradually increases the tension by allowing Clarisse to remain serene and apparently unchallenging – she changes the subject when Montag 'laughs dismissively' at her question about the firemen of old – but her gentle interrogation and philosophical observations are met by Montag's irritability and unease. Soon, they are walking in silence, 'hers thoughtful, his a kind of clenching and uncomfortable silence in which he shot her accusing glances'.

The use of dialogue in this piece adds greatly to the dramatic tension in that it shows us just how at odds the speakers are. Clarisse's gentle but probing questions and seemingly casual observations show her thoughtful and reflective nature. Montag, on the other hand, only speaks at any length early on in the conversation, when he gives his glib, rehearsed piece of propaganda about book burning. It soon becomes clear, however, that he is increasingly uneasy and even irritated by Clarisse's questions and comments which show up his rather shallow and unquestioning approach to life. Bradbury's decision to allow Clarisse to continue talking serenely while Montag falls largely silent highlights the contrast between the characters' natures and moods and makes us fear a little for Clarisse who is speaking openly of issues which Montag's reactions show us to be controversial at best and positively dangerous at worst.

I think it is clear from this short extract that Bradbury's style of writing is wonderfully dramatic and descriptive.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION B (50)

Note: You could deal with 'your life' and 'today's world' separately or treat them as one. The choice is up to you.

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B:

1. What <u>form</u> should this task take?
This is a radio talk. Remember, your audience will not be able to see you, nor you them! If you are used to writing talks you may be in the habit of including lines such as 'I can see a few people nodding' for example. Obviously, you can't do that here.

2. What should the <u>content</u> be?
You must focus on the importance of books in your life and today's world. In other words, it is not enough simply to talk about books you have read and enjoyed. You must talk about the effect books can have on our lives.

3. Who is my <u>audience</u>?
Your audience is probably wide and varied, and you do not know who they are. However, you should try to keep the listeners engaged throughout your talk.

4. What <u>register</u> should I use?
If you are trying to convince the listeners of the importance of books, you will need to be persuasive. You may also want to include some anecdotes which may be narrative and descriptive. Remember that a radio listenership can be anyone in the room or the car where the radio is playing, so make sure that what you say is appropriate for all ages. If you want to aim your talk at a specific audience, then you should mention that at the outset, perhaps by welcoming the listeners to a particular show.

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Sample Answer:

Good evening everyone and welcome to this week's edition of 'Think Again', the show that encourages you to revisit prejudices old and new and hopefully gives you the opportunity to see these things in a new light and from a different angle.

TIP: The examiner will be looking to see that you have an awareness of your audience and that you are writing a talk, not just an opinion piece. A short introduction can help with this.

This week we'll be looking at the important role books play in our lives. You'll notice that I didn't say 'literature'. That's because we will be looking at a wide range of genres, from the purely factual to the utterly fantastical. The unifying thread, however, will be the role that these books play – or perhaps should play – in our lives.

Later on we will be discussing this issue with our weekly guest panel and there will, of course, be a chance for you to phone in or text us your questions and opinions. Before we get to that, however, I'll take my usual few minutes on the soapbox!

TIP: Again, keep your audience in mind throughout.

Those of you who tune in each Tuesday will by now be more than familiar with my attitude towards our increasingly digital age. Of course I think we have to embrace it, but let's not throw out the baby with the bath water when it comes to written texts. There is a body of opinion which states that books have had their day, but I couldn't disagree more.

I want you to take a moment to think back to the first book which made you laugh, cry, wonder or question the world around you. For me, it was C. S. Lewis' ,'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'. When the mice nibbled Aslan's restraining ropes, I cried bitter tears. I don't think it is possible to exaggerate the flights of fantasy, imagination, intrigue and sheer escapism books have taken me on over the years. And why do they possess such magic? Well, I believe that they allow us freedom to engage with the text by visualising the setting, the characters and the action. Television, on the other hand, does all the work for us, and that's why I don't think it is as pleasurable. It's like having someone chew your food for you! Books make us work a little harder, but the rewards are far greater than anything the TV or film screen has to offer.

I'm not just championing the cause of fiction. Factual books have a vitally important role to play in our lives too, today more than ever. 'Why?' I hear you ask. Well, I feel very strongly that one of the huge disadvantages of the information saturation that comes with having so many types of media so easily available is that the facts come to us so quickly that, by and large, they have not been edited, checked, put into context or reflected on in any way whatsoever. Books, on the other hand, present a more measured and reflective view of topics ranging from our current economic crisis to politics, the environment and religious tensions, to name but a few.

That's enough from me for a while. I hope you'll stay tuned to hear our panel's opinions on this issue after the nine o'clock news. They'll be worth waiting for, I assure you! As a little taster of what's to come, here's one of our guests, John Banville, reading from his new bestseller, 'Ancient Lights'. Over to you, John.

TIP: Make it clear that your talk is coming to an end, and sign off in as realistic a way as possible. Remember, you are on the radio. You could say something like, 'More on this topic after this break', or 'But now, over to the news desk…' The choice is up to you.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (i) **(15)**

Note: The key words in this question are 'animal welfare'. Do not go off the point and talk about how zoos benefit people.

The word 'outline' tells you that you should summarise the main points of each argument. Do not go into too much detail. Do not give your own opinion.

You may feel that one of the arguments deals with animal welfare more than the other one does. Don't worry about this as you do not have to write an equal amount on both sides of the argument.

The best way to approach this question is to go through each paragraph, underlining the key points in the arguments.

Sample Plan:

Veronica Chrisp:
- Enriched lives;
- Fit and healthy;
- Naturalistic spaces;
- All aspects of animal's lives catered for;
- Ethically managed by caring professionals;
- Strict codes of practice.

Bernie Wright:
- Inadequate quality of life;
- Unnatural confinement;
- Health problems; natural instincts frustrated.

Sample Answer:

Veronica Chrisp is Head of Marketing at Dublin Zoo and therefore argues strongly that animal welfare is a high priority in zoos. She claims that animals in modern zoos live 'enriched lives' in habitats designed to cater for their 'physical, psychological and social needs'. The enclosures, according to Chrisp, are 'naturalistic spaces' intended to reflect the animals' native habitat. She offers proof of the animals' well-being by saying that they are 'fit and healthy' and successfully raising their young. Chrisp even goes so far as to say that Dublin Zoo's elephants find their enclosure 'a delight'.

TIP: Keep quotes short and weave them into the fabric of the sentence.

Chrisp also refers to the 'ethical and well-managed zoo' run by professional people who devote themselves to ensuring that the animals in their charge are properly cared for. Moreover, they abide by 'strict [international] codes of practice in animal welfare'.

TIP: If you need to change a word in a quote or include another word for the purposes of clarity, then put the replacement inside square brackets [ ] to indicate that it is not part of the original text.

On the other side of the argument, Bernie Wright, Press Officer of the Alliance for Animal Rights, believes zoos are nothing more than prisons for animals and that those who run them care more about profit and human entertainment than animal welfare.

Wright claims that animals in zoos have an inadequate quality of life. She says that they do not have enough space to roam freely or behave naturally and gives the example of elephants in the wild travelling more than forty miles a day; something which is clearly not possible in the overcrowded confines of a zoo. Dublin Zoo, for example, houses six hundred animals in sixty acres.

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Wright also contends that animals in zoos suffer physically and mentally. Elephants, she says, develop 'chronic health problems' while other creatures 'just go mad'. In Wright's opinion, the zoo environment is an unnatural one which does not allow animals to express their natural instincts and therefore 'the enclosure becomes a prison'.

TIP: Keep your focus on animal welfare throughout your answer and avoid discussing the educational benefits or otherwise of zoos.

It is obvious that the women hold completely opposite views on animal welfare in zoos, with Veronica Chrisp insisting that animal welfare is a high priority and Bernie Wright arguing vehemently that it is not.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: You must give your own opinion but it should be rooted in the text. This is made clear in the words 'Having considered the views expressed in the text'.

Use the language of argument and/or persuasion in your answer.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

Opinion: *Yes, zoos should be closed.*

1. Agree that habitats not natural – quality of enclosures depends on zoo.
2. Not educational: internet/television excellent alternatives. Animals not seen behaving naturally – can even be insane.
3. Conservation claims are false.

Sample Answer:

Having considered the views expressed in the text, I am firmly of the opinion that zoos should be closed. I cannot see any reason for animals to be confined in unnatural conditions for our entertainment or education.

TIP: Make your viewpoint clear in the opening sentence.

In the text, Veronica Chrisp argues that zoos have come a long way since Victorian times, but that is not far enough, unfortunately. While I am sure that some zoos make great efforts to provide naturalistic habitats for the animals, it is not realistic to expect to be able to provide the sort of space that a lion or an elephant, for example, would have in the wild. Also, I noticed that Chrisp talked about 'the ethical and well-managed zoo' but neglected to discuss those hundred of zoos around the world where animals are kept in very poor conditions indeed. There may be an international code of practice but that does not mean that every country, or indeed every zoo, will choose to adhere to it. I cannot support the notion of keeping wild animals in captivity, particularly when the animals' welfare is entirely dependent on the level of professionalism and caring of the zoo directors and staff.

TIP: In an argument, you can briefly state and then refute the other person's point of view.

Not only are animals badly served by zoos, but so are those who visit them. The argument that Chrisp puts forward promoting the modern zoo as a 'living classroom' is disingenuous at best and downright misleading at worst. As Bernie Wright points out, the abundance of wildlife programmes on television allows us to watch animals behaving naturally in their native environment. The excellent David Attenborough series, for example, shows us days, weeks, months and even years in the lives of animals from all over the world. A quick visit to the zoo, no matter how much learning material is provided, could never hope to come close to the depth and breadth of information captured in 'The Trials of Life' or 'The Blue Planet'. These programmes have attracted controversy over the years for their depiction of killer whales hunting seals or chimpanzees

TIP: Note the way in which the topic sentence of this paragraph is linked to the previous paragraph.

TIP: It is a good idea to root your personal response in the text. However, you should ensure that you express your own opinions and give your own examples rather than just repeating those you read in the text.

killing and eating monkeys, but the point is that animals in the wild are wild! Zoos in which great hunters like lions or cheetahs are fed dead meat every day teach us nothing about the reality of these creatures' lives. Not only are the animals behaving unnaturally but, as Bernie Wright points out, they are sometimes driven mad by their confinement and so are even less representative of their wild counterparts than if they were simply tamed and domesticated. Neither the animals nor those supposedly learning from them benefit from this wholly unnatural state of affairs.

TIP: The final sentence relates back to the topic sentence and thus ties up the paragraph neatly.

As well as supposed educational benefits, the conservation side of zoos is often touted as a reason for keeping them open. However, as Bernie Wright points out, Dublin Zoo is unable to provide any hard evidence to support the claim that they are saving endangered species or returning them to the wild. The vast majority of animals in zoos are not endangered at all but are chosen for display because they are popular with zoo visitors. I cannot see why the money poured into captive breeding programmes could not be reallocated to creating and protecting wildlife preserves and doing everything possible to encourage animals to breed and raise young in their natural habitats. I have watched numerous documentaries about zoos – usually made with the zoos' full co-operation – in which newborn animals had to be removed from their parents because the adults had no idea how to care for the offspring. This seems to me to prove that by confining animals in zoos we are doing nothing to ensure the future of the species but are in fact creating new generations of creatures who are wholly dependent on humans for their existence.

TIP: It is acceptable to offer alternatives to zoos, but remember to stick to the point.

In conclusion, then, I believe that zoos are outdated and irrelevant in modern society and that they serve neither the animals they imprison nor those humans who pay to see them displayed in their unnatural habitats.

TIP: If you feel strongly about the case you are making, you may decide to use emotive language such as 'the animals they imprison'.

TEXT 1 – QUESTION A (iii) (20)

Note: The important thing to note here is the second part of the question, which asks you to comment on the effectiveness of the features you have chosen. Always watch out for the word 'and' in a question in order to ensure that you answer everything you are asked.

Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.
You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Emotive language – Chrisp focuses on children, Wright focuses on animals.
2. Factual information.
3. Rhetorical questions.
4. Logical, coherent argument.

Sample Answer:

Veronica Chrisp and Bernie Wright use a mixture of argumentative and persuasive language to make their case. They employ a combination of emotive language, factual information, rhetorical questions and a logical approach to the topic to great effect when making their respective cases.

Both women use emotive language to get their point across, but Chrisp focuses on the joy zoos bring to children while Wright concentrates on the animals' suffering. Chrisp opens by asking us to imagine the look on a young child's face as it sees 'an elephant, a snake or a gorilla for the

TIP: This is the topic sentence. The rest of the paragraph will develop this point and support it with suitable quotation and/or reference to the text.

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very first time'. This is an effective use of the language of persuasion as it appeals to our emotion rather than our logic. Asking us to visualise the scene is clever in that it forces us to make the idea our own to a certain extent by requiring us to create this positive image in our mind. At the end of her piece Chrisp again asks us to imagine something, but this time it is the deprivation children would suffer without the opportunity to see animals in real life. This cunningly manipulates us in that we compare this scenario to the happiness of the imaginary child we were asked to visualise in the opening lines. Wright employs a similar technique on behalf of the animals when she urges us to 'really look into an animal's eyes' the next time we visit a zoo. She appeals to our sense of morality by comparing the animals' confinement to 'life imprisonment without ever committing a crime'. This is a powerful use of emotive language in that we are naturally appalled at the thought of such injustice and we can imagine how we would feel if we were treated this way.

TIP: It is important to say that the use of emotive language is effective, and to explain why it is so.

Chrisp and Wright also substantiate their claims with factual information. This feature of the language of argument is effective in that it shows the cases are well-researched and that the speakers have hard evidence to support the points being made. Chrisp makes a convincing case for animal welfare in zoos by telling us that zoos adhere to a strict international code of practice. She goes on to tell us of the large numbers of people – including 50,000 schoolchildren – who visited the zoo in 2007, showing that the zoo is important in terms of education as well as entertainment. It must be said, however, that Wright uses factual information to greater effect than does Chrisp. She points out the overcrowding in Dublin Zoo with 600 animals in roughly 60 acres. This compares most unfavourably to her next fact which is that 'elephants can roam more than 40 miles a day in their natural surroundings'. Furthermore, Wright attacks Dublin Zoo with its own facts and figures, showing there is no evidence that their captive breeding programme has introduced more than a single animal into the wild since the 1800s. Wright makes a powerful case against one of the primary reasons zoos give to justify their existence.

TIP: You were asked to comment on the effectiveness of the features of language, which means that you can talk about the degrees to which they were effectively used.

Another area where Wright triumphs over Chrisp is in her use of rhetorical questions: a feature of both persuasive and argumentative language. While Chrisp does use one at the end of her speech when she asks us who would tell the children about the animals if zoos were closed, she weakens her own argument by mentioning television in the next sentence. The obvious answer seems to be that children could learn such things from good wildlife programmes. The rhetorical questions Wright uses, on the other hand, are far more provocative. She asks us if we think that animals really deserve 'life imprisonment without ever committing a crime'. The only realistic answer to this is 'No'. Therefore, Wright manipulates our opinions far more successfully than Chrisp does, in that Chrisp provides a reasonable alternative answer to her own question.

One thing that unites both arguments is the coherence of the approaches. Chrisp believes that zoos play an important role in our society and she makes her point very well. At the same time, Chrisp acknowledges that 'the very word "zoo" often has negative connotations', but she refutes this immediately by listing the high standard of care the animals receive. Her main point is undoubtedly that zoos bring joy and knowledge to generations of visitors, and she both opens and closes with references to this, thus ensuring that her case is consistent and well-structured. Wright does the same in terms of animal welfare, honing in on what she sees as the inadequacy of the animals' quality of life and providing several examples to back this up. Like Chrisp, Wright briefly acknowledges and refutes the other side of the argument by pointing out that zoos are unnecessary both in terms of education and species preservation. In both cases, the coherence and logic of the argument is most effective in keeping the main points clear in our minds.

TEXT 1– QUESTION B **(50)**

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B:

1. What <u>form</u> should this task take?
This is a script to accompany an animation. All that is required is that you give a brief introduction to the characters and start a new line when switching from one character to the other. If you have stage directions, put them inside round brackets.

2. What should the <u>content</u> be?
It is up to you whether you want to promote or oppose zoos. Try to think of an animal you know a little bit about, so you don't risk sounding ridiculous! Don't have a tiger pining for the Australian outback, for example.

3. Who is my <u>audience</u>?
Your audience in this case is anyone who might see the cartoon film. Don't be misled by the word 'cartoon'. It does not necessarily mean that the animation is for children only. The reason for the cartoon format is to allow animals to speak.

4. What <u>register</u> should I use?
You are trying to promote or oppose zoos, so your language should be persuasive. You may wish to include some language of narration too: perhaps you will allow an animal to tell its story.

Sample Answer:

The following scene takes place in the elephant house of a zoo at night. Two elephants, a mother and calf, stand inside on a bare concrete floor. There is some hay in a corner of the enclosure and the adult elephant picks at it in a desultory fashion while the youngster paces in seeming agitation.

TIP: You should briefly set the scene and introduce the characters. Think of your studied drama / studied film script here.

TIP: The fewer characters you have, the easier it is to control the dialogue.

TIP: Don't worry about giving the animals names. You can if you like, of course, and if you do so then you should say who's who in the introduction.

SON: Mother, why are you just standing there? It's time to go! I can feel it. We have to move on.

MOTHER: (Turning and looking sadly at her anxious son.) Settle down, dear. We're not going anywhere. I've been telling you this every day.

SON: But we have to go! We need to get away, to find our own land.

MOTHER: This is our land, now.

SON: (Incredulously.) This? This is our land? But what about all the stories you and my aunties told me about travelling for weeks and weeks to find new grazing and fresh water?

MOTHER: (Sadly.) Those stories are all true. But we shouldn't have told you any of that. It's just that, well, sometimes we remember our youth in Africa, before we were rounded up and brought here. We travelled for great distances, seeing the desert plains, the great Okavango Delta in full flood . . .

SON: (Impatiently.) I know all about that, and I want to go there too, with you. Why won't you take me? Why do you want to stay here?

MOTHER: (Wearily.) I've tried to explain it to you, but you are young and you don't listen.

SON: I'm listening now.

MOTHER: Well then, I'll tell you all I know, as honestly as I can. (Sighs deeply.) I don't want to stay here. None of us do. This cold land with its rain and its wind is not our home. But look around you, at the bars and walls. We could never get out of here, and we never will. Never. And even if we did, there is nowhere for us to go.

SON: But what about my father? He went back to Africa, didn't he? You told me that when I asked where he had

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gone. If he can go, I can go too. I need to go, mother! I feel like I'm going crazy. There's something inside my head calling to me and telling me that it's time to move on.

MOTHER: (Harshly.) Now you sound just like your father! He could never accept life in this place. Every day his mood grew darker until one day he snapped. He turned on one of the humans and pinned him against the wall. He may have killed him; I don't know for sure. There was confusion . . . you were too young to realise what was happening. They took the man away, but your father . . . Oh, son, they shot your father. Do you hear me? That's what will happen if you persist with this foolish talk of roaming free in Africa. Eventually it will eat you up inside and you will meet the same fate as your poor father.

SON: They killed my father? I don't understand. Every day I hear them talking about saving us from death. The girl who brings the people here on the tours boasts that without the zoo, we'd have been killed by poachers and that we are safe here. Safe! (Laughs bitterly.) So, we are safe as long as we do what they want. But as soon as we do what is natural to us, as soon as we behave according to our natures, they kill us. Is that what you're telling me?

MOTHER: Yes. That's exactly what I'm telling you. But, son, you must try to make the best of it. As long as we follow their rules, we will live long lives together. Now come and eat something. Let's forget about all of this.

SON: (Moving away and standing by the bars.) No, mother. I won't rest until I've thought of a way to get out. It's all right for you. You had a life in Africa before you came here, but what you're telling me is that I'll live and die in this place. I can't bear it, and I won't. What use is a long life it's a life like this? I'll find a way out. I will.

MOTHER: (Sadly.) I've lost him, just like I lost his father. Just when I thought there was nothing more I could lose.

TIP: It should be clear that the dialogue has reached an end.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: The word 'and' in the question means you are required to comment on the town **and** the people. You need not give equal weight to both.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Small town, rural. Lacks amenities (library), dirt road, hunting etc.
2. Friendly people, hunting / sewing circle invitations.
3. Conservative and traditional; gender stereotypes; tolerant of those who are different.

Sample Answer:

The impression I get of the town is that it is a small, rural place whose people are welcoming and have a strong sense of community and tradition.

The smallness of the protagonist's home place is indicated by the fact that his father is the 'town's only solicitor'. Furthermore, we are told that the boy's family home had more books in it 'than could be found in the county library', which points to a lack of the sort of amenities that could be found in a large town or city. The isolation of the town is evident in the boy's description of the Lagoons as being 'Just five hours south off a good dirt highway'. That the youngster could consider a five-hour drive inconsequential and comment positively on the state of the 'dirt highway' tells me that his home town is deep in the countryside. Hunting is a great focus of interest amongst the people, which again points towards a rural location.

TIP: Use short quotes, woven into the fabric of the sentences. Long quotes only prove to the examiner that you are capable of copying from the printed text.

The second thing that struck me about the town was the friendliness of the people. We are told that the boy's father was invited on a hunting trip when he first moved there as 'an act of neighbourliness'. Despite his constant refusals, it was not taken amiss that he never went and he was invited for many years afterwards, which shows how determined his neighbours were to include him. Once the narrator was old enough, he was invited on a hunting trip each year, just like his father. The welcoming and inclusive nature of the townspeople is also seen in the ladies' 'heavy hints' that the writer's mother should join 'the sewing circle and the jam-and-chutney makers'.

TIP: When you describe an aspect of the author's home place, be sure to link it back to the question by saying what impression this gives you of the town and/or the people.

The final aspect of the boy's home place that I noticed was that while the people engaged in rather traditional, conservative pursuits, they were tolerant of those who chose a different path. We are told that each year the men and boys went hunting, while the women were expected to confine themselves to domestic activities such as sewing and bottling preserves. However, despite this gender stereotyping, the townspeople did not seem to resent those who do not go along with their traditional way of life. The narrator's father is described as 'a respected figure' who was liked even though he seems to have little in common with men who enjoy 'gun talk and game talk and dog talk'. His dislike of hunting was seen as simply another one of his odd behaviours and was taken in good spirits.

TIP: This is the topic sentence. The rest of the paragraph will develop and support this point.

Overall, the town the author describes seems to be an appealing place filled with decent, welcoming people who are happy with their traditions and their rural lifestyle.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: You must comment on the way the boy gets on with both parents, but you do not have to give equal weight to both. In this text we learn more about the boy's relationship with his father than we do of his relationship with his mother.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Boy understands and respects his father. Senses his refusal to hunt is based on experiences as soldier. Knows hunting talk is not for him.
2. Accepts father's authority. Father not happy to deny son chance to go on trip.
3. Parents react well to boy's decision to go when old enough. Father accepts choice. Mother sensitive to boy's possible embarrassment.

Sample Answer:

Yes, I think the boy has a good relationship with his parents, based on mutual respect and sensitivity.

The narrator clearly understands his father very well. He realises that his refusal to go hunting is not because he is 'stand-offish or condescending' and surmises that it may be a result of his father having seen enough killing during his soldiering days. He also knows that his father is not the sort of person to enjoy 'gun talk and game talk and dog talk'. The boy's intuitive appreciation of his father's personality shows liking and respect, and all his comments show his father in a positive light.

The youngster's respect for his father means that he does not complain when he is not allowed to go on the yearly hunting trip with his friends. He accepts his father's authority and even sees that the older man is not entirely happy about refusing to allow his son to join the hunting party. The father feels 'uneasy about it' and this leads the boy to hope that he will relent soon. It is clear that the father does not enjoy denying his son the chance to go to the

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Lagoons any more than the boy enjoys having to wave his friends off each year. I think the way both father and son deal with this situation shows what a strong relationship they have: the father is sorry that he cannot bring himself to accede to his son's request, and the son does not rail against his father's decision but sees it is based on love and concern for his wellbeing.

TIP: Be sure to link all your points back to the question.

Further proof of the boy's good relationship with his parents is seen when they finally allow him to go on the trip. They realise that he is old enough now to make his own decisions and when he says he would like to go, his father raises no further objections and does not appear regretful. He does say that the boy's mother will 'worry her soul case out' until he is safely home, but even at sixteen the narrator knows that this is really his father's way of saying that *he* will worry. In fact, all that the boy's mother does is to tell her son to look after his friend. It is obvious that she understands her son well in that she does not embarrass him in front of his friends by fussing over him and coming out of the house to say goodbye. Still, her love for her son is shown in the fact that she is up before dawn to see him off.

All in all, it seems that the boy and his parents get on very well indeed and show great affection and decency in their dealings with one another.

TIP: A brief conclusion can help to tie your answer up neatly.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION A (iii) (20)

Note: The important words here are 'identify' and 'comment'. You must discuss the features you select and give examples to illustrate each one.

Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point. You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Strong narrative voice helps us to engage with the boy.
2. Characterisation: descriptions and dialogue bring characters to life.
3. Setting: atmosphere of small town effectively recreated.
4. Detailed description of Lagoons/morning of hunt etc.

Sample Answer:

This extract from David Malouf's short story 'The Valley of the Lagoons' is written in the first person and the strong narrative voice throughout helps us to engage with the text because we identify with the protagonist as we see his perspective on his home place and the events that unfold there. We feel as if we are listening to the confidences of a friend and thus we become involved with the story and keen to discover the outcome. The narrative voice in this extract is consistent throughout and therefore appears credible and trustworthy. For example, the boy's attitude towards his father is one of respect and understanding, and this never wavers even when the father refuses him permission to go on the hunting trip.

TIP: The features of style are clearly identified.

Another aspect of narrative writing that makes this piece so appealing is the author's effective use of characterisation. In the space of a short extract, he brings the boy's father to life for us by revealing interesting facts, such as that he has 'been a soldier in New Guinea' and thus his refusal to go hunting may be because he has 'seen enough […] of killing'. This is informative but it is also intriguing and we would like to learn more of the father's story. The use of dialogue is another way in which we are

TIP: It is important to comment on the feature of style by saying what effect it has on the reader.

given an insight into the father's character. Whether it is his politely refusing the hunting invitation in his 'easy way' with a casual but polite 'Not this time I reckon. Ask me again next year, eh?' or his hiding his concern for his son by claiming that his mother would 'worry her soul case out till you're home again', we feel we can almost hear the father's voice as he does his best to treat those around him fairly and kindly.

TIP: Where possible, you should try to link your paragraphs.

As well as the narrative techniques, the author uses a number of features of descriptive writing to draw us into the world he depicts. He introduces the Lagoons in a way that makes them appear mysterious and exciting. The name itself, he tells us, had a 'magic' that drew him from a young age. Furthermore, the area was not marked on any map or atlas, 'which gave it the status of a secret place'. The powerful and vivid imagery used when describing the Lagoons is particularly impressive. Broad vowel sounds and onomatopoeia used when telling how the rivers 'plunge and gather and flow wide-banked and muddy-watered to the coast' effectively capture the power of the water and the scale of the enormous rivers as they move steadily towards the sea. The rivers are personified as they 'lose themselves' in their 'leisurely' journey through the 'mudflats and swamps', which adds to the sense of vitality and magic pervading the place.

Another feature of descriptive writing that struck me from my reading of this extract was the author's ability to create atmosphere. This is most clearly seen in the description of the men and boys preparing to go on the hunting trip. The trip itself is shrouded in mystery as the narrator has never been allowed to go, and this is reflected in the fact that the hunters gather in 'the misty half-light just before dawn'. The small details such as the older men 'stretching their legs, stamping their boots on the frosty ground or bending to inspect the tyres' while the older boys are 'squatting on their heels over a smoke' create clear pictures for the reader and allow us to share the feeling of anticipation as the hunters go through their last-minute rituals before climbing into the laden trucks and heading off.

David Malouf's skill at storytelling is evident even from this short extract and I would certainly like to read on and discover how the boy fared on his hunting trip.

TEXT 2 – QUESTION B (50)

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B:

1. **What <u>form</u> should this task take?**
   This is a short speech.
2. **What should the <u>content</u> be?**
   You should give reasons why parents should trust older teenagers to make their own decisions.
3. **Who is my <u>audience</u>?**
   Your audience is people the same age as your own parents.
4. **What <u>register</u> should I use?**
   You should be persuasive, but you should also be respectful. It's fine to be chatty, but don't use slang or bad language. Your speech could be serious or light-hearted; that is up to you.

TIP: Make it clear that this is a speech and not just a piece of persuasive writing. Address your audience directly a number of times during the speech.

Sample Answer:

Good evening, everybody, and thank you all for taking the time to sit patiently and listen to various members of the student body presenting their point of view on issues that affect all of us. You will no doubt be relieved to learn that I am the last speaker tonight and that I do not intend to keep you for long. My chosen topic is one which I know is close to the hearts of all my fellow classmates and one which is a bone of contention in many, if not all, of our households. Should you, our parents, allow your older teenagers more responsibility?

The first thing I would like to say to all of the parents here tonight is that you have done a great job. No, I'm serious. Don't look so sceptical. Give yourselves a little credit. Thanks to your years of tireless work, we are ready to face the world.

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The next step is up to you. Do you trust that your parenting has moulded us into reasonable young adults who know the difference between right and wrong and who are capable of having a great time without ending up in A&E, prison or worse? You should! Now you need to let go a little and allow us to prove to you that we have learned the lessons you taught us. That will never happen unless you bite the bullet and allow us a little more responsibility to make our own decisions.

TIP: Rhetorical questions are a feature of the language of argument/ persuasion.

Now I know what you're thinking: 'The last time I allowed him to prove how responsible he was I had to pick up the pieces for weeks afterwards'. And you have a point. We will make mistakes. In fact, I can see my parents in the front row, nodding. I freely admit that one night last weekend I came in three hours later than I said I would. And Dad took me aside and explained that it wasn't the so much lateness of the hour as the lack of information that bothered him. He pointed out that if he or Mum were going to be late, they'd let the other know, because that's what adults do. And I realised then that being an adult does not mean doing whatever you want, but does mean realising that it's only fair to let those who care about you know what you're up to. I wouldn't have learned this lesson if I had not been allowed the freedom to make mistakes in a secure and controlled environment. I'm not promising that I'll never be late again, but I will definitely text my parents to let them know what I'm up to. And hopefully they'll respect my decision to stay out a bit later from time to time.

TIP: Anecdotes are an appropriate way to support your point in a speech of this type.

As well as our social lives, the other area where there is often conflict between parents and children is in the choice of third level courses. Parents worry that if left to make their own decisions, their teenagers may not select a course that offers them a good chance of future employment. However, a recent Irish Times poll of first year college students found that of the nine per cent of students who dropped out at the end of first year, over half said it was because they had been pressured by parents into doing a course for which they were unsuited. Even more tellingly, over ninety per cent of students who achieved first class honours at the end of first year attributed their success to the fact that they were studying a course they had researched and decided upon themselves. Certainly, they had help from parents and teachers, but the final say was theirs. I'm sure that if all of the parents here tonight take a moment to reflect on their education and career choices, those that are happiest are those who followed their own dreams, not those of their parents.

TIP: This is not true, but it is plausible. You can make up facts and figures as long as they are not ridiculous.

To sum up, what I'd like to leave you with here tonight is the knowledge that you have done sterling work to date but that you are not finished yet. Give us more responsibility to make our own decisions and see how well we do. With your help, I'm sure we'll go from strength to strength. And on that note, I would like to thank you all for listening to me so patiently. It is that understanding willingness to hear our point of view which makes you the great parents you are. And if that doesn't gain me a later curfew, I don't know what will! Thank you and goodnight.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (i) (15)

Note: You should be aware that this question requires you to discuss both the written and the visual text. You do not need to address both equally, nor do you need to separate them in your answer.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Freeze time – man jumping puddle – fraction of a second.
2. Moment before or after event – captures emotion – young lovers.
3. Realistic – man and cat – solitude – would be irrelevant if 'patched together'.

Sample Answer:

In the opening paragraph of this extract, the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson tells us that the term 'the decisive moment' refers to a moment in which time is frozen and a moment is captured. This moment may only last for a 'fraction of a second' and that is the instant when the photographer must 'know when to click the camera'. The first image in the visual text perfectly exemplifies this frozen moment in time. The man jumping the puddle is in mid-air, and we do not know what will happen when he lands. It is irrelevant, really, as the decisive moment is that in which he is in full flight and committed to his course of action. For us, the viewers, the man exists only in this moment in which time is stopped.

TIP: This paragraph refers to both the visual and the written text.

A decisive moment does not have to be one of action, however. Van Riper tells us that it may also be the moments 'after or before an actual event'. Such moments capture the emotions of the participants, whether they are anticipation or exultation and allow us to share in them. The writer gives the example of taking a photograph of a child in the split second after it has blown out candles on a birthday cake and is 'flush with excitement and achievement'. We see another example of this in the second image: 'Friendship, New Jersey. 1947.' A boy and a girl sit on a bench and he leans towards her, probably hoping for a kiss. The picture perfectly captures the couple's emotions. His eagerness is shown in the way he holds his arms around her neck and angles his entire body towards her, while she appears less involved. She sits rather demurely, hands in her lap and her head angled away from the boy and towards the snow-covered river. We sense the boy's anticipation, but there is also something slightly agonising in the girl's apparent lack of interest. This is a moment for holding one's breath and wondering what the result of his overtures will be.

TIP: Try to link your paragraphs whenever possible.

Finally, a decisive moment is defined by Van Riper as one which is unique and cannot be 'patched together from different digital elements'. The reality of the situation is vital. An example of this can be seen in the third image, 'Solitude, Downtown New York. 1947.' The strength of the image lies in the composition, which captures a mood or atmosphere that is only evocative or stirring if it is real. We wonder why the man is sitting on the footpath, head bowed and hands wrapped around his knees while a cat sits nearby, solemnly regarding him. The man's isolation rouses our interest and our pity, and the fact that his only companion is a cat emphasises his solitary state. Were we to learn that this was a false image created by photoshopping different elements together, it would lose its emotional impact.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (ii) (15)

Note: The important words here are 'select' and 'comment'. You must discuss the features you choose and give examples to illustrate each one.

Sample Plan:

As this is a fifteen mark question, you would be expected to write three well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point.

1. Conversational language draws us in and connects us with the writer.
2. Anecdotes (guitar) bring topic to life for us.
3. Quotations support points being made and make it appear writer's viewpoint is shared by others.

Sample Answer:

One of the first aspects of the author's style that struck me was the easy, conversational tone throughout. The subject matter is quite technical but the colloquial language in phrases such as 'a passable photo of a kid with billowing cheeks blowing out candles' and 'I've learned that…' draw us in and connect us with the writer. Instead of being a dry account of photography, this extract instead appears to be an informal but informative chat between the writer and the reader and this makes it most engaging.

TIP: You must remember to comment on the features of style you select.

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The second aspect of Van Riper's style which appealed to me was the way in which he brought his topic to life through the use of anecdotes. The idea of 'the decisive moment' is quite an abstract one and possibly difficult to understand, but stories such as the rather sweet and touching one about the toddlers' delight on being allowed to hold their brother's electric guitar illustrates the idea perfectly and help the reader to relate to the topic. It seems fitting that the author is using this story to demonstrate the importance of 'the little human detail' in photography as it is equally important in good writing. Anecdotes such as this move the topic from the realm of the abstract to the concrete.

Finally, I was taken with the effective use of quotations and reference in this extract. Van Riper quotes the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson and the writer David Jenkins in support of his point that photography has a vital and unique role to play in the world of the visual arts. These quotations are interesting in themselves, but they also add weight to Van Riper's argument by showing us that other noteworthy figures such as 'the legendary photographer' Cartier-Bresson feel the same way he does.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION A (iii) (20)

Note: This question requires you to discuss one of the images in detail. The prompts/suggestions given in the question can be a very useful starting point when planning your answer. You do not need to use these prompts if you do not wish to do so, of course, but you would still be well advised to consider them carefully before deciding on your approach.

Sample Plan:

As this is a twenty mark question, you would be expected to write four well-developed points. Use a separate paragraph for each new point. You may also wish to add a brief introduction and/or conclusion.

1. Attitude: he is leaning toward her, she is sitting still and looking ahead.
2. Caption: there is nothing more than friendship here, despite his advances.
3. Setting: cold, industrial; reflects lack of warmth in relationship.
4. Youth and innocence: simple clothes highlight this. More decisive moments ahead!

Sample Answer:

The image that made the greatest impact on me is 'Friendship, New Jersey. 1947'. It is a simple picture of a boy and girl on a bench, but it is most effective in capturing a decisive moment in the couple's relationship.

TIP: Describe the image in as much detail as you can.

The aspect of the image that affected me most strongly was the way in which it depicts the difference in attitude between the girl and the boy. He is straddling the bench, facing the girl and leaning eagerly towards her. His arms are around her neck and it appears he is moving in for a kiss. His posture suggests anticipation and energy. The girl does not appear to reciprocate the boy's hopeful advances. She is sitting with her body angled away from his, hands in her lap. While he appears to be in motion, she is perfectly still. Her gaze is focused – not on the boy – but on the rather dull view of the snow-dusted, frozen river in front of her. Nothing in her posture suggests that she returns the boy's affection. There is something almost heart-breaking in her seeming indifference to his advances.

The caption, 'Friendship' seems an apt one, given that there is no indication that this relationship will deepen into anything more than friendship. Perhaps, of course, the couple are already going out but if that is the case, I suspect the relationship is doomed. The boy clearly has love on his mind but the girl appears not to share his enthusiasm and romantic spirit. I find it a little sad to think that the boy and girl may not be on the same wavelength, but this photo interests me because it makes me wonder about the individuals pictured.

The lack of romance in this image is reflected in the setting. The couple sits on a river bank, but the water is frozen and dusted with snow. I think the lack of warmth in the landscape reflects the lack of warmth the girl feels towards the boy. Also, the pair is seated in the shadow of a tree which can just be seen on the right hand side of the frame.

Again, I feel that this shade is significant in that it seems to hint at something being hidden or kept in the shadows; perhaps the girl's true feelings for the boy. The two shadows of the tree branches are angled away from one another, which again suggest a lack of unity. In the background can be seen a ship and docklands buildings. I wondered if the girl was looking at the ship and thinking of escape! This rather industrial setting also takes away from any notion of true romance in the picture. It is impossible to know what the boy and girl are thinking, of course, but I believe the setting establishes a mood that is not in keeping with love's young dream. I cannot help but think there is a certain amount of sadness attached to this image and that is emphasised by the rather dreary backdrop and large section of featureless space in the centre of the photograph.

TIP: Remember to combine detailed descriptions of the image with comments on the impact the each of these details had on you.

The final aspect of the photograph which struck me was the youth and seeming innocence of the boy and girl. There is nothing sophisticated about them at all. He is wearing a plain white tee-shirt and jeans, while she is wearing a rather shapeless, short-sleeved dress. The fabric of her dress balloons out at her shoulders and waist and flows in uneven pleats from the waistband. The couple's clothes are oddly moving as they suggest that the boy and girl have not yet reached adulthood or sophistication. This, combined with the awkward romantic advance the boy is making, highlights how young they are and how many more decisive moments like this one they are likely to have to go through in the years to come.

All in all, I found this image caught and held my attention because in one single shot it seems to tell a story and yet at the same time make us wonder what will happen next.

TEXT 3 – QUESTION B (50)

Sample Plan:

You don't have the time or the space to ramble on so make sure your points are organised before you write. It can help to ask yourself the following four questions before you begin Question B:

1. **What <u>form</u> should this task take?**
   This is a formal letter.
2. **What should the <u>content</u> be?**
   You must describe five images that you think reflect the lives of young people and justify your choice in each case.
3. **Who is my <u>audience</u>?**
   Your audience is a teacher, and although you may know her well, she is not a friend.
4. **What <u>register</u> should I use?**
   Your tone should be formal throughout. You should use descriptive and persuasive language.

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Sample Answer:

The Orchard,
Curragh Hill,
Mallow,
Co. Cork

St Mary's College,
Main Street,
Mallow,
Co. Cork

26 April, 2013

Dear Mr O'Mahony,

I am writing to you in response to the announcement you made in last Friday's assembly when you asked students to think of five images that they would like included in your upcoming photographic exhibition on the lives of young people. I have given the matter a great deal of thought since then and I have come up with a selection which I feel would be ideally suited to your exhibition.

TIP: Be positive without being boastful. You are trying to sell your ideas.

The first image I would suggest is a group of boys and girls sitting at a table in a café. The teenagers should be ignoring one another as they hold mobile phones in front of them and stare intently at the text messages or social-networking pages. I feel strongly that young people today are so focused on living a virtual life that they can sometimes forget to live a real one! All too often they can neglect to communicate with those in the room with them because they are so busy updating their status on Facebook or posting a tweet to tell their all their online friends that they are out enjoying a coffee with so and so.

The second image I would like to see included in the exhibition is a student sitting at a desk in a classroom, surrounded by piles of books. The student should have his head in his hands in an attitude that suggests a mixture of frustration and exhaustion. Unfortunately, this scenario is a daily reality for thousands of students around the country as they prepare for their exams. The pressure on us all is overwhelming at times, particularly as the Leaving Cert draws ever closer.

Next, I would propose a compilation of logos taken from brands of clothes, cosmetics, bags, and mobile phones that are most popular with young people. There should be as many logos as possible, and they should overlap to suggest that there are more than can fit comfortably on one page. I believe that this would be an accurate representation of the way in which young people today are lured by seductive advertisements and a perceived pressure to have the latest and the greatest versions of various products.

TIP: Don't forget to justify your choice in each case.

The first three images I have selected are rather negative, so I would like to bring a little balance into my collection of images by choosing pictures which represent the positive aspects of life for young people today. With that in mind, I would like to see a photograph of young people dressed in all different sorts of sporting attire. Sport, of all sorts, plays an important role in the lives of young people. Too often, we think of sports only in terms of ball games, but a recent survey in our school showed that the students participate in dozens of different adventure sports as well as the more traditional football and rugby. For that reason, I would like to see a large number of young people wearing everything from GAA jerseys to motorbike gear.

TIP: This shows that you have given the matter some serious thought rather than just stringing together a collection of random images.

The final image that I think would be suitable would be a young person sitting or lying on a couch, relaxing and listening to music through headphones. I believe that music is something which unites all teenagers. For our generation, just as for previous ones, music is a way of telling others what sort of person you are and can be just as revealing as taste in clothes. It is also a great way to unwind, particularly during stressful times such as the lead-up to exams. I doubt there is a student in the school who does not have an MP3 player in their bag at all times.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my choices, and whatever your decision I look forward to seeing the exhibition next month.

Yours sincerely,

Conal O'Leary

TIP: When you know the name of the person to whom you are writing, you sign off with 'Yours sincerely'. Watch the spelling!

SEC 2011 - HAMLET

D. (ii) 'Claudius can be seen as both a heartless villain and a character with some redeeming qualities in the play, *Hamlet.*' Discuss both aspects of this statement, supporting your answer with suitable reference to the text.

Sample Plan:

- Good king: opening speech is impressive
- The Ghost reveals another side to his nature: he is a murderer and an adulterer
- Slightly redeemed by being troubled by his conscience but because he will not repent fully he cannot be fully redeemed
- Driven by self-interest: willing to sacrifice others (Laertes and Gertrude for example) to serve his own ends
- Final impression: Claudius had good qualities but allowed them to be overruled by the immoral, corrupt side of his nature and so deserved to die

Sample Answer:

Claudius, like so many of the characters in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, is a complex and fascinating character who excites both admiration and revulsion at various stages in the play. Although he is the villain of the piece, Claudius is not merely an evil sociopath. He is a good king in many ways and a skilled diplomat, and he feels pangs of conscience for his heinous crime against his brother. It does appear that he loves his wife, although his means of procuring her love are utterly despicable. He is brave in facing down Laertes and his angry mob, but a coward in the way he kills his brother and manipulates the lives of others to serve his own ends. He is certainly not likeable, but he is human. However, the positive features of his character are not enough to redeem him and in the end Claudius goes to his grave unmourned by the audience who see his death as just reward for a man who was ultimately self-serving and ruled by greed.

TIP: Your introduction should outline the points that you will discuss during the rest of your answer. Remember, if you mention it in the introduction, you must deal with it over the course of the essay.

When we first see Claudius, he appears eloquent, relaxed and in control. His opening speech deals with personal and political matters and is polished, persuasive and carefully structured. The first half of the speech sugar-coats his marriage to his brother's wife, claiming that both he and Gertrude balanced their love for one another with their sorrow for the death of Old Hamlet:

With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole.

Claudius smoothly moves on from the potentially controversial topic of his recent marriage to the threat posed by young Fortinbras' plan to capitalise on the recent change of government in Denmark by 'Importing the surrender of those lands / Lost by his father'. This is a clever move as it reminds the people that any civil unrest in Denmark could leave them vulnerable to attack from outside, while also showing that he, Claudius, is dealing with the matter decisively by sending his ambassadors to the king of Norway. Yet this is more than a mere show of power. Claudius' actions are well-judged, as we learn later in the play that young Fortinbras is reined in by his uncle and promises 'never more / To give the assay of arms against your majesty'.

However, there is more to Claudius than this diplomatic, public face. The Ghost describes him as 'that incestuous, that adulterate beast' and tells Hamlet that Claudius murdered him in a cowardly and foul way. The 'leprous distilment' Claudius poured into his sleeping brother's ear caused his skin to erupt into a 'vile and loathsome crust'. Hamlet echoes the audience's horror on hearing of this dreadful crime when he calls Claudius a 'smiling, damned villain'. Despite his affable, capable public persona, Claudius is a lustful, corrupt man and no amount of skilled leadership can make up for the fact that he is what is 'rotten in the state of Denmark'. His crimes of fratricide and incest make him unfit to rule.

An interesting facet of Claudius' character and one which goes a small way towards redeeming him in our eyes when we first learn of it, is that he is troubled by his conscience. When he hears Polonius tell Ophelia that people can hide their wickedness by pretending to be virtuous, Claudius remarks in an aside, 'How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!' and refers to his crime as a 'heavy burden'. Similarly, in the Prayer Scene, we see that Claudius is tormented by his guilt, admitting 'my offence is rank, it smells to heaven'. Another aspect of Claudius' nature that gains a certain admiration is his ability to face the truth. He is self-aware enough to know that because he 'cannot

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repent' his crime and give up what he gained by the murder of his brother, he does not deserve to be forgiven. This evidence of humanity reminds us that Claudius is more than a heartless villain, but because he cannot fully repent, we must conclude that this is not enough to redeem him.

TIP: Any points you make must be linked back to the question.

It is self-interest that drives Claudius and prevents him from acknowledging or admitting his guilt, and this self-interest also means that he will do whatever it takes to protect himself and his position. The fact that he does so cleverly and coolly does not mitigate the heinous nature of his crimes. Hamlet's play shows that his crime is known and this makes Hamlet a threat to Claudius. He concludes that it is unsafe to 'let his madness range' and arranges for him to go to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern where he will be executed. Even more damningly, Claudius is willing to manipulate the lives of those who pose no threat to him if so doing will further his own ends. His dealings with Laertes show his bravery and good judgement on the one hand in that he swiftly suppresses his rebellion and persuades the young man that he is 'guiltless of your father's death', but also show just how corrupt he is when he convinces Laertes that it is morally right to kill Hamlet. Most cruelly and selfishly of all, Claudius does nothing to stop Gertrude from drinking the poisoned cup as he would be implicated in the plot to kill Hamlet if he were to intervene. When Gertrude falls, he even pretends it is because she is distressed by the bloody fight between Hamlet and Laertes: 'She swoons to see them bleed'.

Ultimately, Claudius' determination to live a lie and to trade his soul for the throne and the queen as his wife, seals his doom. Laertes remarks that the dead king 'is justly served' when he is both stabbed and poisoned by Hamlet, and it would be difficult to disagree with this assessment. Claudius was neither a heartless villain nor a monster but he chose to suppress the better side of his nature and be led by the morally corrupt side of himself, which was his undoing. We are left, therefore, with a picture of a man whose talents in leadership and shrewdness in judging human nature came to nothing because his public and private life were based on murder and deceit and such crimes cannot go unpunished.

SAMPLE QUESTION - HAMLET

What is your view of the importance of either Gertrude or Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*? Support the points you make by reference to the play.

Note: You are free to choose either woman.
Focus on the **role** of your chosen character.

Sample Plan:

- Ophelia is Hamlet's love interest: shows us his view of women
- Exploited by others which is symptomatic of the world of the play
- Her innocence and purity highlight the corruption of others
- She excites our pity and sympathy as she is torn between two worlds and treated badly by Hamlet

Sample Answer:

The principal role of Ophelia in the play is to be Hamlet's love interest. She appears to truly care for him and is wounded by Laertes' assertion that Hamlet's interest in her is 'Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting', asking sadly, 'No more but so?' She does not want to believe Hamlet does not love her and her adoration for him remains undiminished. She praises him as 'that unmatched form and feature of blown youth' and is dismayed at his apparent descent into madness: 'O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!' It is Ophelia who tells us what Hamlet was like before his father's death and his mother's marriage to Claudius: 'The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword' / The expectancy and rose of the fair state'. Her praise of Hamlet does not only show us how much she loves him, but also reminds us that the young prince was once far happier and more admirable than he is when we first meet him. However, their relationship is doomed from the moment Hamlet meets the Ghost and Ophelia becomes a victim of the plotting and intrigue that marks the Danish court.

Ophelia suffers because Gertrude betrayed Hamlet's late father. Hamlet takes out his rage and disgust with his mother on the innocent Ophelia and blames her for sins she has not committed. He claims that only a fool would marry her or any woman because 'wise men know well enough / What monsters you make of them'. Later, as they wait to see Hamlet's play performed he taunts her with the crudest of puns and innuendos, referring to 'country matters' and 'puppets dallying' which confuses and distresses Ophelia. Every time she asks him to explain himself, Hamlet merely attacks her with further hurtful words. Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia is grossly unfair but it does serve to highlight his negative and misogynistic views.

TIP: It is important to link any point you make about Ophelia back to the question. In other words, you need to comment on her role in the play and why she is important.

It is not just Hamlet who exploits Ophelia's loving and trusting nature. Her inexperience makes her unable to fathom Hamlet's abuse of her and it also makes her unable to stand up to her father and brother when they tell her what to do. She heeds Laertes' advice to hold Hamlet's passion for her as 'a toy in blood' and she shows similar obedience to her father's wishes when she says 'I do not know my lord what I should think' in response to his probing questions about Hamlet's intentions. Her exploitation by others highlights the way in which the powerful characters in the Danish court can use and abuse those who are weaker or more naïve than they are.

TIP: It is essential to keep your focus on the question throughout. The question asked you to comment on the improtance of your chosen character so you must ensure that every example you use can be linked to the character's role in the play.

Polonius' treatment of Ophelia is particularly unpleasant and is symptomatic of the corrupt nature of the world of the play. Ophelia turns to her father for help and advice when Hamlet comes to her room in a dishevelled state, acting oddly. Polonius shows no real concern for his daughter but instead leaps to the conclusion that Hamlet is mad for love of her and he wonders how he can use this to his advantage. He uses her as bait to trap Hamlet into admitting the reason for his madness and the obedient and dutiful Ophelia agrees to do as he says. Hamlet's harsh treatment of her: 'I loved you not', wounds Ophelia deeply and she cries 'O, woe is me, / To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!' when he leaves. Polonius and Claudius, who have been spying on the couple, care nothing for her sorrow and Polonius merely says 'You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said; / We heard it all' before ignoring her and turning to Claudius to discuss the best way to deal with Hamlet. That a father could abuse his daughter's obedient and trusting nature shows just how rotten things are in the state of Denmark.

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Ophelia's innocence and purity highlight the corrupt nature of the court and also draw the audience's sympathy. Her plight is a terrible one and as the play progresses and intrigue follows intrigue, it is the pure and blameless Ophelia who suffers the most. The man she loves turns on her and blames her for all the sins he perceives in women. Her father treats her as bait, telling Claudius 'I'll loose my daughter to him', and shows no compassion when this scheme leads to Hamlet verbally attacking Ophelia. Finally, the man she loves kills her father and hides his body before it is found and hastily buried without due ceremony. It is no surprise, then, that Ophelia should be unable to cope with this litany of horrors and that she should descend into madness. Her piteous condition appals Laertes and his words 'Do you see this, O God?' as she wanders through the court singing and handing out flowers to those she meets, echo the audience's dismay on seeing the deterioration in the young girl's mental state.

Ophelia's death is truly tragic. Unlike the deaths of the other characters, all of whom have behaved badly in one way or another, Ophelia was entirely innocent from start to finish. She was too unworldly and too pure to comprehend the plotting, corruption and deceit around her and she could never adapt to such a place as Elsinore has become. Her final role is to show us that purity and goodness can do little when faced with evil.

INTRODUCTION

Tips on How to Approach this Question

In this section, worth 20 marks, you will be asked questions on a poem you have probably never seen before. Remember, the poem has been carefully chosen to be accessible to Leaving Cert students so the chances are that you will understand it fairly easily if you approach it calmly and sensibly.

Marks: It is worth remembering that **the unseen poem is worth 5% of your English exam**. That could easily mean the difference between an A or a B.

Timing: Leave the unseen poem until last, and spend about twenty minutes on it.

Preparation: Read the poem three times before attempting the questions. It can be helpful to read the questions after the first reading, as they can set you on the right path or show you where you should focus your attention.

When you are reading the poem, consider the following:

- **Introduction.** Is there an introduction to the poem? If there is, be sure to read it. It is there for a reason. If none is needed, none is given.
- **Title.** Does the title tell you anything about the theme of the poem? Does it set up expectations that are perhaps fulfilled or shattered as you read on? The title of the poem is very important and the poet spent quite some time choosing it, so don't ignore it.
- **Theme.** What is the main message of the poem? Love is a very common theme, as are war, childhood, memories, and the beauty of nature.
- **Tone.** This is the feelings and attitude of the poet towards the subject of the poem. Think of the tone of voice the poet would use if reading this poem aloud. Would the tone change as the poem progresses? Would some parts be read in a loud, excited voice and some in a quieter manner? The tone can change several times throughout the poem. If you notice changes as you are reading through it, jot them down on the page beside the relevant lines in the poem.
- **Rhythm.** Is the pace of the poem fast or slow? Does this tell us anything about the theme or the tone? (A slow rhythm is often associated with sadness.) What effect does the rhythm have? Does the rhythm vary? If so, why? Poems can have exciting moments in between calm, reflective ones. Look at the punctuation. Is there end line punctuation? That can slow the rhythm of the poem. Is there enjambment/run-on lines? That can speed up the rhythm of the poem. A full stop at the end of the poem can suggest closure and can tell us that the poet has come to some sort of understanding/resolution of the issue.
- **Rhyme scheme.** Is there a rhyme scheme? If so, what effect does it have on the poem? For example, a poem written in rhyming couplets has a definite rhythm, and single ideas are often contained within a couplet. A poet may use a rhyming couplet at the end of the poem in order to focus our attention on the main message of the poem or to make the lines in the couplet stand out. If there is no rhyme scheme, ask yourself why not? Or does the poem only contain full rhyme at the end? If so, this may indicate closure or may link the lines/ideas in our minds.
- **Tenses.** Is the poem in the past, present or conditional tense, for example? Does the tense change? Does this indicate that the poet has reached a conclusion? Or does a switch to the present tense show that the poet has become deeply involved with the issue? Is something unresolved?
- **Language – imagery, sounds etc.** This is your opportunity to use key literary terms. Indeed, it is important that you do so. Start with sound: is there any alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia etc.? Remember, like drama, poetry is really meant to be read aloud and the sound is very important.

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- **To whom is the poet speaking?** Does the poet address the subject of the poem directly? This can create a sense of intimacy. Does the poet address the reader directly? Use of the word 'we' can make the reader feel connected with the poet. Does the poet speak in the poem or does he/she assume another persona? If so, why?
- **Your response to the poem.** Did you like it? Why? Why not? You must explain yourself fully here. Don't worry if you didn't understand every aspect of the poem. The exam question(s) will not require you to do so. And remember, your response is valid if you can support it with quotation from or reference to the poem.

TIP: A common mistake is for students to point out features of style but fail to explain the effect they have on the poem. Every time you point out a feature of style, use a verb to say what effect it has. For example, *'The soft 'l' and 's' sounds in the alliterative "I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore" add to the peaceful atmosphere of the poem.'*

2016

AND YET THE BOOKS

By Czeslaw Milosz

1. (a) Outline the ideas expressed by the poet in this poem. Support your answer with reference to the text. (10)

Note: This is a question on themes. The question asks you to focus on *ideas* rather than an idea, so you should try to think of at least two, if possible.

Sample Plan:

- Books are born of nature but they also transcend this mortal life
- Books live on forever and bear witness to our shorter, frailer lives

Sample Answer:

I believe the ideas the poet expresses in this poem are that books are a part of the natural world and yet they also transcend the natural world as a result of being read.

TIP: Make your ideas clear from the start of your answer. An introductory sentence can help here but if you are pushed for time, you do not need to include one.

Books may be born of nature as a chestnut is born of its parent tree but they take on a life of their own when 'touched' and 'coddled'. Readers, it is implied, bring the books to life as once they have embraced the ideas contained within, the book is 'well born'. Although it is 'Derived from people' a book is also derived from 'radiance' and 'heights', implying that the insights and truths books contain are so important that the books can inspire their readers in an almost divine way.

The poet says that once a book has been written, its message will live on no matter what happens to it. It is a being in its own right and cannot easily be silenced. Books will say 'We are' despite their pages 'being torn out' or flames consuming them. They may indeed bear witness to the very 'fires on the horizon' that threaten to destroy them. Books are 'So much more durable' than we are as they are not mortal beings 'whose frail warmth / Cools down with memory, disperses, perishes' but are expressions of ideas that will live forever.

TIP: Always remember to support your points with quotation from the poem.

1. (b) Select two images from the poem that you think best convey the poet's ideas. Explain your choice. (10)

Note: This question deserves a little more thought than previous questions on images which have tended to focus on why they *impressed* you or *interested* you or *appealed* to you. Here, you have to tie your answer into the points you made about the theme in question 1(a). Bear this in mind throughout your answer.

Sample Plan:

- 'still wet / As shining chestnuts' emphasises link between books and nature; highlights idea of their being born and becoming separate beings
- 'Women's dresses, dewy lilacs, a song in the valley' highlights ephemeral nature of humanity compared to lasting power of books.

Sample Answer:

The first image which struck me in this poem was the beautiful analogy likening books to shining wet chestnuts 'under a tree in autumn'. This, I feel, perfectly conveys the poet's idea of books being part of the natural world yet having a power and a life of their own. Books, after all, are born of trees in that their pages are products of wood but this image reminds us that they can also go on to greatness, just as the little chestnut can become a mighty tree. Once they are in the world, books say 'We are' and live in their own right.

TIP: Remember the terms of the question. Link the images to the poet's ideas.

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The second image which I feel perfectly captures the idea of books holding to the truth of their message in an ever-changing world is the description of life as a pageant of 'Women's dresses, dewy lilacs, a song in the valley'. There is something beautiful in each item on the list but yet their appeal is ephemeral, unlike the lasting value and worth of books. Fashions change, flowers fade and a song finishes but books transcend time, and the truth to which they bear witness is constant and unchanging.

TIP: Again, remember the terms of the question. Link the images to the poet's ideas.

TIP: The word 'ephemeral' means something that lasts for a very short time. It appeared in the 2003 unseen poem and it is a word worth knowing. You must always build on your existing vocabulary.

2. Discuss the language used by the poet throughout the poem. Refer closely to the text in your answer. (20)

Note: There is, as you will no doubt notice, a great deal of overlap between this answer and the previous shorter answers. However, this is to be expected as there is a great deal of overlap between the questions and you will not be answering questions 1 *and* 2 in the examination.

Note the instruction 'Refer closely to the text in your answer.' It is essential to examine the language in detail and quote to support every point. You are not required to say anything in particular about the language, so focus on those aspects that you genuinely find interesting, appealing or appropriate for the topic.

Sample Plan:

- Title is intriguing: suggests possible alternatives
- Likening books to chestnuts reminds us of link between trees and books and also reminds us that great things can come from small beginnings
- Direct speech gives books a life of their own
- Final line suggests books can illuminate our lives and inspire us

Sample Answer:

The first thing that struck me about this poem was the title, which is repeated in the first line: 'And yet the books'. This is an intriguing opening which made me wonder what the alternative could be. It is almost as if we have joined the poet in mid-thought and are instantly drawn into a discussion.

TIP: Remember to give a personal response to the language used in the poem. You can do this by describing the effect the various aspects of the language had on you.

As I read on, I was captivated by the beautiful analogy likening books to shining wet chestnuts 'under a tree in autumn'. This, I feel, perfectly conveys the poet's idea of books being part of the natural world yet having a power and a life of their own. Books, after all, are born of trees in that their pages are products of wood but this image reminds us that they can also go on to greatness, just as the little chestnut can become a mighty tree.

The poet cleverly uses direct speech to give the books an identity of their own. Once they are in the world, books say 'We are' and live in their own right. No matter what may happen to them, their ideas have been set free and exist independently of the books' physical form.

TIP: Be specific when discussing the language used in the poem.

The imagery in the poem perfectly captures the idea of books holding to the truth of their message in an ever-changing world. A particularly beautiful and powerful example is the description of life as a pageant of 'Women's dresses, dewy lilacs, a song in the valley'. There is something beautiful in each item on the list but yet their appeal is ephemeral, unlike the lasting value and worth of books. Fashions change, flowers fade and a song finishes but books transcend time, and the truth to which they bear witness is constant and unchanging.

The final line of the poem is as intriguing as the title. Milosz says that books, although created by people, are also derived from 'radiance, heights', which I feel suggests that books can illuminate our lives and inspire us to reach new heights of achievement or understanding.

2015

Peter Street

By Peter Sirr

1. (a) What do you believe is the central message of this poem? Support your answer with reference to the poem. (10)

Note: This is essentially a question on the theme of the poem. Ask yourself why the poet sat down to write what he did. What was he thinking about and what conclusions, if any did he draw when mulling over the issue?

As this is a ten-mark question, you would be expected to write two paragraphs in response. As you read the poem, you will see that the poet moves from grief and a sense of holding on to the memory of his father in his final illness to a determined decision to let the sorrow go and to remember the man as a person full of life. You may find it helpful to write one paragraph on each feeling.

Sample Plan:

- Central message is that we need to let go of our grief in order to fully celebrate our loved ones' lives
- Son was initially upset when he could no longer link site to his father's illness
- Moved on to see that he should set the painful memories free and celebrate life rather than death

Sample Answer:

I believe that the central message of this poem is that it is important to let go of grief after the death of a loved one in order to fully celebrate that person's life.

In the opening stanzas, the poet is taken aback to discover that the hospital where his father spent his time during his final illness has been pulled down to make way for a new building. Although the memories of that place had been painful, they at least provided a link between the son and his late father. Sirr says that he had 'grown almost to love this street' as whenever he walked down it he could imagine his father's face at a window. Clearly, it is not easy to let go of the memory of his father as he last knew him and a part of him wishes that 'some ache' would remain in the new building so that his father would live on, somehow.

However, there is a sudden change of mood at the end of the fourth stanza. Now the poet dismisses his former feelings completely, telling himself in no uncertain terms to 'Forget all that'. He passes the site and in so doing, he moves on metaphorically as well as literally. Now Sirr wants the new building to be a 'marvelous house' full of happiness and music. The poet has accepted his father's death and is progressing past the stage of being locked in grief. It is not just the vision of the father who leaves this place with 'his life in his hands'; it is the poet too.

The message we are left with is that there comes a time to move past grief and towards a more joyful remembrance of the loved one who has gone.

1. (b) Identify two images that you find interesting in this poem. Explain your choices, supporting your answer with reference to the poem. (10)

Note: The key word here is 'interesting'. This allows you leeway to go into detail about any two images you found thought-provoking, whether you liked them or not. As always, you are advised to be as positive as possible in your answer.

Sample Plan:

- Idea of being pinned and held by father's gaze shows how painful the memory was but how the poet needed to hold onto it
- Very different image of father climbing down hospital wall shows how we can let go of grief

Sample Answer:

One of the first images I found interesting was that in which the poet wanted to 'pin my father's face to a window, feel myself / held in his gaze'. The words 'pin' and 'held' imply that this memory is not something voluntary and pleasant but

TIP: It is important to keep referring to the question.

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rather something forced and painful. This seemed to me to be very much in keeping with the first stanzas of the poem in which the poet is unable to let go of the pain that both he and his father felt in the latter's final days. I was intrigued by the idea that someone would rather hold onto pain than to nothing at all.

The second image I found fascinating is that in the final stanza. Now the poet has moved on from clinging to the memories of a dying father and has instead decided to let his spirit free and to celebrate his life. Before this point, he wished his father to be remembered as 'a flaw in the structure' or 'some ache', but now he prefers to imagine him climbing down the wall of the hospital, inspired by the 'stubborn heart' of St Valentine and running off 'with his life in his hands'. I liked this image very much as his father has moved from the static, dying face at the window to a man who has regained his vitality and is taking charge of his life once more. It shows how we can let go of grief and remember loved ones as they were in their prime.

2. Based on your reading of the above poem, identify the emotions expressed by the poet and explain how these emotions are conveyed in the poem. (20)

Note: Note the word 'emotions': you have to identify more than one. Very often poets are working through an issue over the course of a poem and you may find that by the final lines they have come to some sort of resolution and do not feel the same way they did at the start. Look out for a turning point in the poem where you think that may occur. The word 'how' in the question is important as it tells you that you must talk about the poet's style as well as the feelings expressed. If there are different emotions, there will be a change in the language. Movement may change to stillness or vice versa. Verbs and adverbs can be a good starting point when looking for a change in language.

There is some repetition of points made in the first answer and in this second one, but remember that on the day of the exam you will only be answering one of the options.

Sample Plan:

- Poet clinging to memory of his father as he was in hospital but it is not a happy memory
- Surprised and bewildered to find the building gone
- Doesn't feel ready to let go just yet – language shows that the pain he feels is better than nothing
- Comes to a resolution – moves on literally and metaphorically – celebrates father's life and makes the memory a joyful one

Sample Answer:

I believe that over the course of this poem the poet moves from sorrow and pain to a more positive frame of mind in which he decides to celebrate his father's life rather than cling to memories of his final illness and death.

In the opening lines we see that the hospital where the poet's father presumably spent his final days has become a repository for his son's memories of him. However, the language makes it clear that these are not particularly happy memories as the poet says that he grew 'almost to love this street'. The word 'almost' shows us that the place may be important in allowing the son to feel a connection with his late father but he cannot easily bring himself to feel love or joy as he looks at the hospital. Instead, he is somewhat trapped by the memories and says that the imagined vision of his father 'held' him each time he looked up towards what had been his room. He tries to 'pin' his father's face to the window but he is equally pinned to the spot.

TIP: You must go into detail about the language and fully explain your choices.

On finding the building levelled to make way for a new development, the poet is surprised and bewildered. He had come to rely on this physical link to his memories of his father and now does not know quite what to do. He says that he stares 'stupidly at the empty air, looking for him'. The language here reflects the fact that the poet is not able to move on in any sense: he stops, stands and stares.

It is obvious that the poet is far from ready to let go and accept that his father is gone, and the language he uses shows that he feels painful memories are better than nothing at all. There is nothing positive about the 'obstinate, secret' presence that the poet feels should inhabit the new structure. He says that he would prefer an 'ache', 'a flaw' or 'something unappeasable' to remain in the fabric of the new building, perhaps seeing the demolition of the hospital as an affront to his father's memory and his own grief.

However, we see a complete change of mood in the final line of the fourth stanza. Now the poet dismisses his former feelings completely, telling himself in no uncertain terms to 'Forget all that'. He passes the site and in so doing, he moves on metaphorically as well as literally. Now the language becomes joyful and celebratory. The poet wants the new building to be a 'marvelous house' full of happiness and music. There is a great sense of movement and life here: the music will 'roam', St. Valentine's spirit will float down and lift his father from his bed, renewing him so he is able to 'climb down the dull red brick, effortlessly, / and run off'. The poet has accepted his father's death and is progressing past the stage of being locked in grief. It is not just the vision of the father who leaves this place with 'his life in his hands'; it is the poet too.

TIP: Link the changes in emotion to the changes in language.

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2014

The Peninsula

By Seamus Heaney

1. (a) In the above poem Seamus Heaney recommends driving "all round the peninsula". Based on your reading of the poem, explain why you think the poet recommends undertaking such a journey. (10)

Note: This question allows you free rein to discuss your own interpretation, so do not be afraid to do so. As it is a 10-mark question, you should aim to have two well-developed reasons for undertaking the journey. If you have more, you can of course discuss them, but keep an eye on the timing.

It is worth noting that Seamus Heaney was one of the prescribed poets the year this poem appeared, so many students would have had an insight into his connection with nature etc.

Sample Plan:

- When you feel inarticulate or drained, driving in a place where words are not needed is helpful
- The beauty of the landscape will provide you with food for thought

Sample Answer:

Seamus Heaney recommends driving 'all around the peninsula' because it is a place which will revive tired spirits and provide food for thought.

In the opening line, Heaney tells us that when you are feeling inarticulate, you should 'just drive / For a day all round the peninsula'. He could be referring to lack of poetic inspiration here, or simply feeling drained and quiet. Words will not be needed because this is a place where you can get in touch with nature once again in a 'land without marks'. I wonder if the fact that there are no marks could be a reference to a lack of signs and could therefore indicate that this place is sparsely populated. The focus here is on the landscape and seascape. The land has no need for words, but it can speak to you nonetheless. From the 'sky as tall as over a runway' to the horizons which 'drink down sea and hill' you will be swept away by the limitless beauty of this place.

TIP: Do not feel that you have to be definite in your answer. If you think there are a number of possibilities, feel free to mention them.

Heaney goes on to say that if you absorb the beauty of everything from the 'glazed foreshore and silhouetted log' to the mysterious islands 'riding themselves out into the fog' you will have food for thought and will be able to recall it when you are 'in the dark again'. The memory of this place will sustain you even when you cannot see it any more. Words will still not be needed, but by grounding yourself in the natural world you will have a greater understanding and appreciation of its beauty and will be better equipped to cope with life and 'uncode all landscapes'.

1. (b) Chose two images from the poem that appeal to you and explain your choice. (10)

Note: It is important to copy out the images you have selected so the examiner knows what you are talking about.

Plan:

- Islands riding themselves… mysterious
- At dusk…. Personification adds to drama, power of nature over man

Sample Answer:

The first image I have chosen is in the third stanza, where Heaney describes the islands 'riding themselves out into the fog'. This appeals to me as I find it strikingly unusual and mysterious. I can see quite clearly, in my mind's eye, distant islands appearing to move into the mist as the water surges around them. They need no ship to sail off into the fog, but instead seem to be 'riding themselves' as they vanish from sight. This image fuels my imagination, as I wonder what could lie beyond the fog and can imagine being on the end of the peninsula, almost entirely surrounded by water and thus easily swept away by thoughts of sailing into the unknown. This seems to me to be in keeping with the poem, which I think centres on the idea of finding inspiration from allowing oneself to become immersed in the beauty of the natural world.

TIP: It is important to show your personal response to the image and explain why you found it so appealing.

The second image which appeals to me is also connected to the idea of a journey and it is in the first stanza, when Heaney says, 'The sky is tall as over a runway'. The fact that a runway is used for the purposes of comparison in this simile naturally makes me think of flying off into that vast, open sky. Like the first image I chose, this one seems to me to stress the idea of limitless possibilities that the peninsula suggests to the poet and, by extension, to the reader. I can easily see why this would be an ideal place to go if you felt that you had 'nothing more to say'. The place that Heaney describes so evocatively would inspire even the most inarticulate among us.

2. Discuss the effectiveness of the poet's use of language throughout this poem. Your answer should refer closely to the text. (20)

Note: The most important word in this question in 'effectiveness'. If you discuss the language in the poem and point out features of style without saying whether or not you find them effective, you will get a low grade.

The answer is quite long but it is no harm to see what can be said on the subject.

Plan:

- Simplicity and directness of the opening lines engages the reader immediately.
- Imagery evokes the mystery and inspiration that is to be found in this place.
- Imagery becomes more vivid as the poem progresses.
- The poem begins simply but ends with a more complex idea.

Sample Answer:

The simplicity and directness of the opening lines of this poem engage the reader immediately. Heaney addresses us, the readers, and his message is clear. When you are feeling drained or quiet or merely searching for the right language in which to express yourself, a physical journey around this place can be the starting point for your linguistic journey. It is entirely appropriate that a poem based on the search for articulacy should begin in such a straightforward, uncomplicated manner. The instruction, 'just drive/ For a day all round the peninsula' is effective because it is down-to-earth and conversational and allows us to relate to the poet and his plight.

TIP: Make sure that each point you make is linked back to the question.

The imagery in the poem captures the essence of the mystery and inspiration that Heaney believes are to be found in immersing oneself in this landscape. An example of this is in the third stanza, where Heaney describes the islands 'riding themselves out into the fog'. As I read this line I could see quite clearly, in my mind's eye, distant islands appearing to move into the mist as the water surged around them. They need no ship to sail off into the fog, but instead seem to be 'riding themselves' as they vanish from sight. It is easy to imagine being on the end of the peninsula, almost entirely surrounded by water and thus easily swept away by thoughts of sailing into the unknown. An image which fuels the imagination in this way is entirely in keeping with the theme of the poem.

TIP: Some of the material from the first answer is used again here but you will only be answering one option in the exam so this sort of repetition will not occur.

As Heaney describes the journey 'all round the peninsula', the imagery becomes – fittingly – more vivid. The breakers are 'shredded into rags' on the rocks: a most unusual idea, which perfectly evokes the transition from a solid wave of blue water to patches of white foam. Similarly, the idea of the ploughed field which 'swallows the whitewashed gable' brings this landscape to life and reminds us that this is a place of constant change and movement, where nothing has a chance to grow stale or tired. The imagery is a little dark in both of these examples: the word 'shredded' implies violent force and the dark earth swallowing up the house personifies the land in a slightly unsettling way. All of the imagery, however, is powerful and thought-provoking, which proves that this place is indeed inspirational.

Finally, Heaney brings the poem to a close by returning to the point from which he began. Just as the journey around the peninsula ends up where it started, so does the poem. He may still have 'nothing to say', but now at least he can recall the beauty of this place and the possibilities it offers. The extended metaphor of the journey ends perfectly here. It has been the key to the poet unlocking his thoughts and if we too are willing to travel such a road we may find ourselves equally moved to eloquence by the calmness and quietness of nature.

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2013

The Fist

By Derek Walcott

1. (a) Walcott expresses powerful emotions in this poem. Choose one emotion present in the poem and briefly explain how it is conveyed.
Make reference to the text in support of your answer. (10)

How to approach this question
Part (a) not only asks you to name the emotion but to say how it is conveyed. This means you must discuss aspects of the poet's style.

Sample Answer:
It seems clear to me that the poet is afraid of the situation in which he finds himself. His fear is clear from the opening lines of the poem, when he describes the pain of the love he feels as being like a fist gripping his heart. It immediately made me think that the poet feels that this emotion might actually kill him. He describes himself as gasping brightness, much as a drowning person might frantically suck in air when breaking to the surface. However, any relief is short lived and the fist 'tightens again'. This is a terrifying image and shows me clearly how frightening this sort of intense love can be.

TIP: The question stated that there are 'a number of powerful emotions' in the poem, so you don't have to worry about choosing the right one. All that matters is that you can justify and support your choice.

TIP: You can refer closely to the poem as well as quote from it. Do whichever helps your sentence to flow well.

TIP: A good way to ensure that you stay focused is to make the last sentence of your paragraph relate back to the question.

The second stanza gives us an even more startling insight into the poet's state of mind. The vivid and horrifying image of love being something that could plunge the poet 'howling into the abyss' is a chilling one. He is holding onto 'the ledge of unreason', which implies that what lies beneath him is madness. The poet is on the very edge and if he cannot pull back, he will fall. This is quite a terrifying thought and the long vowel sound in the word 'howling' adds to the sense of fear. The enjambment in this stanza creates a sense of movement and adds to the idea that the poet's emotions are hurtling out of control.

TIP: Whenever you point out a feature of style, don't forget to say what effect it has on you. Using a verb like 'creates', 'adds' or 'evokes' is a good starting point.

It is hardly surprising that the poet's desire is to keep himself safe from this frightening prospect, which is why the steady rhythm and control of the last line seems to me to be a deliberate effort to wrest control from his emotions and stay on the side of reason. He addresses his heart directly: 'Hold hard then, heart', which I believe shows how desperate he is to avoid the horror that awaits if he gives in to the demands of love. It is almost as if addressing his heart as a separate entity will detach him somewhat from an emotion that threatens to overwhelm him.

TIP: You must keep the question in mind throughout your answer.

1. (b) Write a brief personal response to the final line of the poem.
Hold hard then, heart. This way at least you live.
Support your answer with reference to the poem. (10)

Sample Answer:
The first thing that struck me about the last line of the poem was that it stands alone, separate from the final stanza. I wondered if this was to emphasise the poet's resolution to maintain a certain distance in his relationship and not to allow himself to be dragged down into 'the abyss' by an emotion that has 'moved / past love to mania'.

TIP: You are not expected to provide an expert analysis of the poem, so don't be afraid to say that you 'wondered' about something but weren't certain. That is an honest personal response, after all. The main thing the examiner will want to see is engagement with the poem.

I also noticed the rhythm of this line. It is written in iambic pentameter, and the regularity of it has a twofold effect. First, it provides a clear and controlled ending to the poem and contrasts with the enjambment that makes the previous stanza so highly-charged and emotional. There is no rushing here, no sense of mania at all. Instead, there is order and calm.

TIP: Enjambment is another way of saying 'run-on lines'.

TIP: Although you were asked to focus on one line only, it is acceptable to discuss it in the context of the poem as a whole. However, make sure your main focus is on the line in question.

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I thought that this was very fitting in that the poet has come to a definite resolution and has decided on his next course of action, which is to 'hold hard' and stay in control. The second effect of this rhythm is to mirror a regular, steady heartbeat. This seems to say that the poet's heart is not racing or pounding with an overflow of emotion any longer.

Another thing I liked about this final line with its simple, monosyllabic words is the way the poet addresses his heart directly, as if it were a separate entity to himself. Earlier in the poem he speaks of it as 'my heart' but now it is 'you'. Again, I wondered if this was the poet's way of creating a distance between himself and a love that threatens to consume him.

TIP: When a question asks for a personal response, be careful not to simply give an analysis of the line(s). You must keep saying what effect the language/rhythm/tone etc. had on you.

I did feel, however, that there was something a little sad about this last line. Certainly, it is better that the poet not be pulled into an emotional maelstrom that will cause him great pain, but at the same time he appears to be saying that intense love can only be a painful thing. This seems a rather depressing message, and I would have preferred a more uplifting end to the poem.

TIP: The question asked for a 'brief' personal response, but this answer is not particularly brief. It is intended to show you what can be said on the topic, but don't worry if you feel you could not reproduce such detail in the exam.

2. Discuss the poet's use of language in 'The Fist'. Your answer should make close reference to the text. (20)

How to approach this question

In the past, the 20-mark question has generally asked you to write a personal response to the poem. This year, however, you were asked to **focus on the language** in the poem. This is a good example of why you should always read the question carefully and never assume that the questions will follow the pattern of previous years.

When you are asked to discuss the language in a poem, you should try to imagine that you are reading the poem aloud. I realise this is a difficult thing to do in an exam, but remember that the sounds of a poem are very important. Is the language difficult or easy to understand? Is there assonance? Alliteration? Long vowel sounds? Most importantly, what is the effect of any features of style you have selected?

Sample Answer:

The first thing that struck me about this poem was the relaxed, narrative style of the writing. Derek Walcott describes complex emotions in simple, colloquial language. In the opening stanza he tells of his fear and distress as intense love causes him great pain. He describes this in a way to which we can all relate by comparing love to a fist gripping his heart so tightly that he feels he cannot breathe.

The rhetorical question in this stanza engages us as readers and helps us to empathise with Walcott's feelings. By asking if there has ever been a time he has not 'loved / the pain of love', the poet offers us a chance to reflect on the question from a personal perspective. The juxtaposition of the words 'pain' and 'love' makes us think of the connection between the two emotions, just as the juxtaposition of the words 'fist' and 'heart' makes us think of violence and love at the same time. This is most effective in conveying the hurt and anguish that the poet feels when he considers his emotional state.

TIP: Juxtaposition means placing words or ideas (usually contrasting) side by side or near one another.

The second stanza is very powerful because of the rather horrifying yet striking metaphor comparing love to 'the strong / clench of the madman'. Love is neither gentle nor pleasant in this poem, but is something that has the potential to cause great harm. If the poet gives in to it, he will plunge 'howling into the abyss'. The onomatopoeic word 'howling' with its long 'ow' sound effectively conveys the agony and the fear the poet sees in surrendering to the 'mania' of this type of love.

TIP: You must concentrate on the language of the poem rather than the theme. Focus on aspects of style and use poetic terminology.

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The final line of the poem is effective because of its simplicity. The line stands alone, perhaps to symbolise the poet's deliberate detachment from the maelstrom of emotion described in the previous stanzas. The alliterative and monosyllabic 'Hold hard then heart', emphasises the poet's determination to remain steady and controlled despite the power of emotion that threatens to overwhelm him. The repeated 'h' sounds in the first, alliterative sentence mimic the exhalation of breath, perhaps showing that the poet can now breathe freely as he has made the decision to separate himself from the love that gripped him so strongly that even a temporary release allowed him to 'gasp brightness'. However, the words 'at least' in the final sentence seem to indicate that the poet's decision, while necessary, is not without its own pain. He may live, but is that enough?

TIP: This question requires a close reading of the poem, but this is a technique with which you should be familiar from studying your prescribed poetry.

The language in this short, deceptively simple poem powerfully conveys the pain love can cause and the poet's determination to drag himself free of an emotion that has become 'the clench of the madman'.

2012

The Beautiful Lie

By Sheenagh Pugh

1. (a) From your reading of this poem, explain your understanding of the title, *The Beautiful Lie.* (10)

How to approach this question

This is a question on the title of the poem, so you may only be able to write one paragraph. If so, that is fine. Remember that quality is more important than quantity when it comes to the unseen poem.

It is worth noting that very often the title of a poem tells you the theme of the poem.

Sample Answer:

My understanding of the title of this poem is that it is a celebration of the first time a child learns the possibilities inherent in a lie. It may seem odd to call a lie beautiful, but in the child's ability to tell an untruth the poet sees a life in which fiction can take a hold. For the first time the youngster realises that he is living in 'a world whose form / and colour [aren't] fixed', but are instead open to his interpretation. He will not be bound by the literal any longer, but will mould the world to his shape and will be able to 'make songs, create men, paint pictures / tell a story'.

TIP: If you have to change a word or two in a quote so that it fits into your answer, enclose the changed words within square brackets: [ ]. This shows the reader that the words within the brackets are not the original ones.

The beauty of this moment is perfectly captured in the poet's description of it as being 'as moving / as the first time a baby's fist clenches / on a finger'. It is as if she senses a connection between her and the child now and is deeply moved by the experience. She sees that the little boy is on the cusp of embracing the world of fiction and storytelling, and says that he will be so filled with new experiences now that he will fill up 'like a glass' and 'hear the unreal sea in his ears'.

As the writer is a poet and therefore someone who uses words to express far more than the literal, factual truth, it is hardly surprising that she should regard the boy's first manipulation of language to suit his own purposes as a 'Beautiful Lie'.

TIP: A brief conclusion can help link the answer back to the question.

1. (b) Choose one image from the poem that appealed to you. Explain your choice. (10)

Sample Answer:

An image from the poem which particularly appealed to me was the simile claiming that the boy's first lie was as 'momentous as the first / taste of fruit'. I liked this image because it contains layers of meaning and made me think about the nature of lying and whether it is something that should be celebrated or censured.

On first reading, I liked the image because it evoked memories of my own first experiences of new joys such as, perhaps, tasting a new or exotic fruit for the first time. I could almost see the child's delight as he savoured the sweetness of the moment.

However, as I read through the poem a second time and saw the reference to the snake, I came back to the image of the fruit and realised that it could be seen as an allusion to the biblical story of the temptation of Adam and Eve. In that story, the couple tasted the fruit and then lied to God about it. The result was that they were cast out of the Garden of Eden. Interestingly, though, this poem suggests that a lie actually opens up a new and paradisiacal world.

TIP: Don't be afraid to admit that you did not see all the connotations, associations or allusions on your first reading of the poem. An honest, personal response which shows engagement with the poem will get you a far higher grade than bluffing. Your interpretation of the poem is as valid as anyone else's.

TIP: An allusion is a reference to something without mentioning it explicitly. You must try to use appropriate literary terminology in your answers. However, if you are not sure of the exact meaning of a word, don't use it.

The more I thought about this image, the richer it appeared. I began to think about the Bible, which has been called 'The Greatest Story Ever Told'. I thought about the bitter arguments that take place to this day between those who believe it is a completely factual story and those who see it,

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perhaps, as a 'Beautiful Lie' designed to guide us towards a greater truth. I don't presume to have all or any of the answers, of course, but this short and apparently simple image summed up for me the essence of this poem. It made me think about the purpose and the nature of storytelling and for that reason it is an image I will undoubtedly reflect on in the future.

2. Write a personal response to this poem, highlighting the impact it makes on you. Your answer should make close reference to the text. (20)

How to approach this question

It is usually easiest to **move through the poem section by section** or stanza by stanza when responding to a question like this. Approaching the question this way will ensure your answer is structured.

Of course, this is not the only way to approach the question, so if you find a different method works for you, you should stick with it.

You should be aware that the question asks you to highlight the impact the poem makes on you. This means that you should use words to describe your emotions and feelings on reading the poem. You might say, for example, that you were intrigued by something in the poem but be sure to explain why the poem made you feel this way.

Sample Answer:

The first thing that struck me about this poem was the title. 'A Beautiful Lie' seemed to me to be an oxymoron.

TIP: An oxymoron is a phrase which seems to contradict itself. Examples are: 'An exact estimate' (if it's an estimate, it cannot be exact) and 'original copy' (if it's a copy, it cannot be original).

How could a lie be beautiful? Surely a lie is something negative and unpleasant or – at best – a way of avoiding causing offence. A lie may be unavoidable from time to time, but the idea that it should be celebrated seemed extraordinary to me.

My attention was captured by the title, so I read on with interest. The vagueness of the opening lines made me smile. I wondered if the poet was telling the truth or if this whole poem was an example of a 'Beautiful Lie'? The ellipses in the first line, along with the claim that it was 'so long ago' and confusion over whether the thing snapped was 'a stalk' or 'a stake' seemed to indicate a lack of exactness at the very least, and perhaps even a deliberate lie.

TIP: Whenever possible, try to link your paragraphs.

TIP: Ellipses are the three little dots you sometimes see after an unfinished sentence or incomplete thought.

The description of the little boy's thought process as he realises that he has an option and can deny the deed if he likes was wonderfully evocative. I shared the poet's delight in the child's discovery of a world of possibilities. She says that the child's realisation of the power he now possesses shows him that he can 'say the world / different' and need no longer be bound by the literal or factual.

TIP: Be sure to show personal response in every paragraph, but make sure that this is grounded in the text. It is not a good idea to wander off the point and talk about your own life unless you can do so briefly and in a way that stays connected to the poem and the question.

Whether or not the poem is a recollection of a real event is irrelevant. I was swept along by the idea and by the descriptions of the little boy's reaction. Surely, this is the whole point of the poem. If we believe this particular story and are moved by it, then does that not show that lies have the power to beguile and enchant us? I think that this is the case and that the story so beautifully told in this poem is a perfect example of the uniquely human ability to 'make songs, create men, paint pictures, / tell a story'.

2011

Poetry

By Leanne O'Sullivan

1. (a) Comment on one emotion expressed by the poet in this poem. Refer to the text in your answer. (10)

How to Approach this Question

There will be times when you feel able to write a long answer on the unseen poetry, and other occasions where you struggle to go beyond one paragraph for a ten mark question. Don't focus unduly on the length of your answers. You will get a higher grade for one concise paragraph that is to the point than for two or three rambling or poorly-argued paragraphs.

In part (a) you are asked to choose one emotion only. There are a number of options, so don't worry about right and wrong. Concentrate instead on engaging with the poem and trying to imagine how the poet might feel about writing poetry.

Sample Answer:

I believe the poet feels a certain amount of frustration as she struggles to master the art of writing poetry. It is as if she wants to capture something elusive and tantalising – something that is 'vague as metaphors' and teases her with its beauty, but at the same time is just out of her reach. Poetry is like 'feathering clouds' or a 'vapourous image'; it is ephemeral, yet O'Sullivan yearns to make this vagueness concrete and express it in the form of writing.

TIP: This is the topic sentence. It names the emotion. The rest of the paragraph will develop the idea that O'Sullivan feels frustration, and will support this with short, relevant quotes from the poem.

O'Sullivan's frustration is evident in her descriptions of her own failures. She recognises that her poetry will 'never be perfected' and she is unable to rest, knowing that this work is only 'half-born'. She says that despite spending years working to extract the essence of poetry and express it in words, she is 'none the wiser'. It seems that she will have to accept that the task she has set herself may never be fulfilled.

TIP: The first paragraph focused on the elusive, frustrating nature of poetry; the second focuses on the poet herself.

1. (b) Choose a line or phrase from the poem that impressed you. Explain your choice. (10)

Sample Answer:

I found the phrase 'when you snap me up on your lizard tongue' most appealing and intriguing. The metaphor compares the poet to an insect being snatched from the air, and likens poetry to the predatory lizard that strikes without warning, but with unerring accuracy.

What I found most interesting about this image is the idea that poetry is not something that can be tracked down and captured, but is instead the ruthless hunter. It gives me the impression that the power lies with poetry rather than with the poet and that she is helpless to resist when it strikes. The speed with which inspiration can come is effectively captured in the onomatopoeic 'snap'. In the blink of an eye, the poet is struck by the full force of poetry and is caught. It is a strange idea in a way, as poetry is more usually portrayed as something rather beautiful and gentle. Certainly, I have read other poems in which the poet describes the feeling of being caught off-guard by a powerful emotion – I am thinking in particular of the 'sharp, tender shock' Philip Larkin experiences when seeing the clasped hands of the statues in 'An Arundel Tomb', but the key word there is 'tender'. There is nothing tender or pleasant in O'Sullivan's description, and for this reason it caught and held my attention in the way that a more familiar image may not have done.

TIP: Use poetic terminology when you get the chance.

TIP: If you see connections between the unseen poem and others you have read (whether on your course or not) then you can say so. Stay focused, though, and don't go into detail about the other poem.

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2. Write a personal response to this poem. Your answer should make close reference to the text. (20)

How to approach this question

Always read the introduction. In this case it gives you the theme of the poem.

There are a number of different ways of approaching the personal response question. When the poem is long, you may wish to go through it stanza by stanza. Another approach is to discuss the poem under the headings of theme, tone, language and imagery (but not necessarily in that order). This is only a suggestion of course. The most important thing is to **show the examiner that you have engaged with the poem**. You are not being asked to paraphrase the poem, but to respond to it. Make sure you stick to the poem in your answer. Don't go off the point and start talking in detail about your own experiences.

You should be aware that the question asks you to highlight the impact the poem makes on you. This means that you should use words to describe your emotions and feelings on reading the poem. You might say, for example, that you were **intrigued** by something in the poem but be sure to explain why the poem made you feel this way.

Sample Answer:

My first impression on reading this poem was one of relief and recognition. Leanne O'Sullivan describes perfectly the frustration and difficulties that anyone who has tried to write a Leaving Cert essay knows all too well! Admittedly, she is talking about poetic inspiration rather than something as mundane as a homework essay, but I empathised with her feelings nonetheless. It was strangely comforting to realise that someone as talented as this poet could feel that after years of work she was 'none the wiser' and that inspiration is not a tame creature that is there at our beck and call.

TIP: You should show the examiner that you have engaged with the poem, but be careful not to go off on a tangent. Link everything back to the poem.

I enjoyed the unusual metaphors and similes in this poem and felt that they effectively captured both the power and the elusive nature of poetic inspiration. The force and speed with which inspiration can strike is wonderfully conveyed in the phrase 'when you snap me up on your lizard tongue'. I would never have considered comparing inspiration to a snapping lizard, so the novelty of the image appealed greatly to me. Similarly, I found myself slightly horrified but intrigued by the metaphor in the second stanza, which compares writing poetry to butchering an animal and draining 'the reddest blood' from its carcass.

In contrast to these rather violent images, we are presented with other, gentler descriptions of the mystery and vagueness of poetic inspiration. I particularly liked the idea of poetry being like 'feathering clouds' trailing shadows. Both can be seen but neither can be caught or held; they are always tantalisingly out of reach.

TIP: You must keep saying what impact the poem had on you.

What struck me the most about this poem, however, was its paradoxical nature. This is a beautifully-crafted, clever poem about the poet's supposed inability to write a perfectly-crafted poem! Whether she would agree or not, I think she has succeeded. However, it does seem that O'Sullivan's constant striving for the ideal: 'labouring to drain / the reddest blood from your throat', is why she can now write with such force and brilliance. I enjoyed this poem very much and would certainly like to read more of Leanne O'Sullivan's work.

TIP: In this case 'paradoxical' means that the poem is self-contradictory.

2010

Seed

By Paula Meehan

1. (a) What in your view is the mood of this poem? Explain briefly how it is conveyed. Make reference to the text in support of your answer. (10)

How to approach this question

Read the question carefully. In part (a) you are asked to say how the mood is conveyed. The word 'how' tells you that this is a **question about style**, so be prepared to talk about the language and imagery when discussing the mood of the poem.

Sample Answer:

I believe that this is a positive, optimistic poem which celebrates the enduring power of nature and finds in its resilience a symbol of hope even in dark times.

TIP: The opening sentence addresses the question and shows the direction the rest of the answer will take.

The poem opens in a rather pessimistic vein as the poet emerges from the 'gloom / of a house where hope had died' and looks for anything that 'may / have survived' the harshness of winter and the ravages of the storm. The word 'may' seems to indicate that the poet does not think it particularly likely that she will find anything.

Although the mood in the opening lines is rather dark, the poet's discovery of some lupins, which blossomed from seed planted in the autumn, lifts her spirits and fills her with gratitude and joy. They are a symbol of hope and they reconcile the poet with nature once again. Even the raindrops are now seen as positive and are 'a promise' of life to come. The poet does not believe in God but nevertheless is spiritually uplifted by coming across the flowers and is moved to 'bless the power of seed'. She finds joy and comfort in nature in the way others may find solace in their religion. The repetition of the word 'bless' emphasises the gratitude and delight the poet feels as she sees the first signs that winter has ended and that all of nature will soon burst into life once more.

TIP: Where possible, try to link your paragraphs.

1. (b) Choose one image from the poem that appealed to you. Explain your choice. (10)

Sample Answer:

An image in the poem which particularly appeals to me is that of the lupins 'holding in their fingers a raindrop each / like a peace offering or a promise'. The personification of the flowers – they have 'fingers' rather than petals – emphasises the connection between the poet and the blooms and makes their 'peace offering' seem deliberate rather than just an accident of nature. Because the proffering of the raindrops in not viewed as a random act, the mood of these lines is even more uplifting. Nature has changed from an enemy who destroys everything to a gentler, more conciliatory being who wants to tell the poet that all will be well and that she should have hope for the future.

TIP: It is important to either write out the image or to make it very clear where in the poem it occurs.

TIP: Because this is a poetry answer, you should use poetic terminology where possible. When you do so, you must say what effect this feature of style has on you. In this case, the point is that the personification of the lupins emphasises the connection between the poet and the flowers.

I also think that it is significant that the raindrops are the peace offering and the promise. When I first read the line in which the poet comes across the lupins, I assumed she would praise their splash of colour in an otherwise bare garden. That she chose instead to focus on the raindrops intrigued me and made me think about the symbolism of this image. I like the way that the rain – which had been associated with the destructive power of winter storms – now represents the promise of life and growth.

TIP: Show the examiner that you engaged with the poem as you read it.

This simple, charming image created a clear picture in my mind and helped me to empathise with the poet's joy at nature's ability to recreate itself each year and fill us anew with hope and happiness.

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2. Write a personal response to this poem, highlighting the impact it makes on you. Your answer should make close reference to the text. (20)

How to approach this question

There are a number of different ways of approaching the personal response question. When the poem is long, you may wish to go through it stanza by stanza. Another approach is to discuss the poem under the headings of theme, tone, language and imagery (but not necessarily in that order). This is only a suggestion of course. The most important thing is to **show the examiner that you have engaged with the poem**. You are not being asked to paraphrase the poem, but to respond to it. Make sure you stick to the poem in your answer. Don't go off the point and start talking in detail about your own experiences of gardening or winter storms!

You should be aware that the question asks you to highlight the impact the poem makes on you. This means that you should **use words to describe your emotions and feelings on reading the poem**. You might say, for example, that you were intrigued by something in the poem but be sure to explain why the poem made you feel this way.

Sample Answer:

The first thing that struck me about this poem was the straightforward, narrative language. It is as if Paula Meehan is sharing an anecdote with friends, and I found this approach very appealing. I admired the way the poet manages to blend simple language with detailed and vivid imagery. This is a poem that is easily understood on first reading, yet also rewards closer study. An example of this is the description of the seed's 'casual, useless persistence' in the twelfth line. The word 'casual' is an unusual choice to describe the tenacity of a seed that can survive the worst of winter and emerge as a beautiful flower in the spring. If 'casual' seems a strange adjective to describe the seed's persistence, then the next word – 'useless' – is even more astonishing. I was quite taken aback when I read it. Why would the poet say such a thing? Then I wondered if perhaps she meant that in the case of flowers in particular, there is no real purpose to them beyond their beauty and their ability to raise our spirits. Whatever the poet's intention in writing this line, she certainly succeeded in intriguing me.

TIP: Topic sentence introduces the point that will be developed in the rest of the paragraph.

TIP: You must keep referring to the impact/effect the poem had on you.

Another aspect of the poem I enjoyed was its message of hope. I think we can all relate to the feeling of gloom that settles on us after a long winter, and the tentative venturing out into the garden for the first time on the 'first warm day of spring'. As students, we are all too familiar with the seemingly unending months of study and can, like the poet, wonder if there is any prospect of a brighter future. Her delight at finding the 'forgotten lupins' is infectious, and is a reminder to us that sometimes we can find hope and cheer where we least expected it. Perhaps some unexpected delight awaits us all. It's certainly an idea I find most appealing.

TIP: Don't be afraid to relate the poem to your own life, but stay focused. Don't go off on a tangent. Relate each point back to the poem.

The poet's description of the lupins as 'holding in their fingers a raindrop each' made a strong impression on me. The personification of the flowers making their 'peace offering' seems somehow more meaningful and personal, as if the lupins were deliberately presenting a message of hope and promise to the poet. I could easily imagine how it must have looked this way as the lupins reach upwards, raindrops trapped between their clusters of petals.

The celebratory and uplifting tone of the poem makes it a joy to read. The poet's rush of emotion on seeing the lupins is beautifully conveyed by her comparing the moment to a religious experience. Although she says she does not believe in God, she nevertheless offers a benediction to the flowers and the repetition of the word 'bless' shows just how grateful and delighted she is. It is hard not to share Meehan's enthusiasm as she is transformed from someone emerging from 'the gloom / of a house where hope has died' to someone bubbling with happiness as she thanks her lucky stars that 'the winter's ended'.

Overall, I found this to be a charming and positive poem and I would like to read more work by Paula Meehan in the future.

TIP: As a general rule, you should be as positive about the poem as possible without being falsely gushy.

2009

Father's old Blue Cardigan

By Anne Carson

1. Write a response to the above poem, highlighting the impact it makes on you. (20)

How to approach this question
It is usually easiest to **move through the poem section by section** or stanza by stanza when responding to a question like this. Approaching the question this way will ensure your answer is structured.

Of course, this is not the only way to approach the question, so if you find a **different method** works for you, you should stick with it. Some students like to write a paragraph on the theme, another on the tone, and another on the language, for example. There is no hard and fast rule.

You should be aware that the question asks you to **highlight the impact the poem makes on you**. This means that you should use words to describe your emotions and feelings on reading the poem. You might say, for example, that you were intrigued by something in the poem. Be sure to explain why the poem made you feel this way.

Sample Answer:
The title of this poem struck me immediately. I could not imagine how something as mundane as the poet's father's old cardigan could provide material for a poem, so I read on with interest.

The first thing that I noticed in the opening stanza was the poet's use of repetition and blend of past and present tenses. She tells us that her father's old cardigan hangs on her chair now rather than on the back of the chair 'where he always sat'. The use of the past tense when discussing the father indicates that he is no longer with us. However, his importance to the poet is shown by her placing the cardigan on the back of her chair now, perhaps to remind her of her father and to maintain a sense of order in the family home.

The poet tells us that she puts on the cardigan whenever she comes in 'as he did'. Again, this tells me that she wants to keep a link to her father and that this little ritual is her way of doing so. I found this very touching.

TIP: Keep referring back to the impact the poem had on you.

As I read through the poem, I was moved by the poet's description of her father's final days and his second childhood. She describes him as changing from a man who is in control of his emotions – 'his laws were a secret' – to someone who has lost control of himself to the extent that he no longer knows how to dress appropriately for the weather and wears his cardigan buttoned up on a 'hot July afternoon'.

TIP: Short quotes woven into the fabric of the sentence are best.

The final image in the poem is most poignant. The poet compares her ageing father to a child facing backwards on a train journey and seeing only what has gone before, yet being shocked by each event because he is unable to look into the future. His memory and his foresight have failed him and he has been transformed from a busy working man 'stamping / the snow from his boots' to a child-like figure relying on others to tell him what to do.

This is a sad poem, but a very effective portrayal of the poet's father's descent into senility and her sadness at his loss.

2. (a) What impression of Anne Carson's father do you get from reading this poem? (10)

How to approach this question
When you are asked what impression you get of a person, you know that this is a **question about character** so be sure to use words or phrases to describe character in your answer.

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Sample Answer:

The impression I get of Anne Carson's father is that he is a man who has slipped from a position of authority in the house to being someone who needs to be looked after and cared for as you would care for a child.

TIP: The opening sentence addresses the question and shows the direction the answer will take.

The initial descriptions of the father make him appear organised and hard-working: a man whose daughter's memory of him is of his 'stamping / the snow from his boots' as he comes in from work. The repetition in the opening stanza when the daughter says the blue cardigan now hangs on the back of the chair where she always sits, 'as it did / on the back of the kitchen chair where he always sat' makes me think that the father is someone who stuck to the same routine, no matter what. While there is of course nothing wrong with routine, it may hint at a certain inflexibility in the father.

The poet's father also seems to have been a rather private man in that 'His laws were a secret'. Sadly, he went 'mad inside those laws' and was lost to his family even before he died. The description of the father sliding into second childhood is extremely moving. His cardigan – once a symbol of his routine – now becomes a warning that all is not well. He is wearing it buttoned up to the neck on a 'hot July afternoon' and appears to be waiting for someone to take charge of him. Even the verbs associated with the father have changed. From the dynamic 'stamping' in the second stanza he is now depicted as 'standing' immobile on the driveway. He is no longer in charge of his life but is like someone 'riding backwards' on a train, unable to see what lies ahead.

TIP: Whatever approach you take to the unseen poetry question, you should discuss the language of the poem at some stage.

Over the course of this short poem, we are shown how completely the father has changed from a competent, strong adult to a vulnerable, child-like figure.

2. (b) Briefly describe the mood or feeling you get from reading this poem and illustrate your answer from the text. (10)

Sample Answer:

I found this poem both moving and deeply sad. It is a sensitive yet bleak depiction of a parent's slide into senility. The poet is alone with her memories of her father and although she attempts to find some sort of comfort in wearing his cardigan and re-enacting his ritual of putting it on when he came into the kitchen, she does not seem to succeed in her quest.

The language and imagery in the poem add to the sense of sadness and loss. The third stanza tells us of the poet sitting in the dark, which may be a metaphor for being in the darkness of misery as she thinks of her father's descent into dementia. The last line of this stanza is particularly striking: 'Coldness comes paring down from the moonbone in the sky'. The neologism 'moonbone' probably means a sliver of moon in the sky that resembles a curved, white bone and there is something chilling in the idea of coldness 'paring' down from it. It makes me think of a life pared down to the bone, or a dead body reduced to nothing but bone.

TIP: A neologism is a new word or phrase coined by a writer.

The bleakness of this image and the sense of sorrow it evokes are further reinforced in the next stanza when the poet recalls the moment she knew 'he was going mad inside his laws'. The phrase 'going mad' is quite a shocking one; there is no attempt to soften the blow or couch the reality in gentle euphemisms. Neither does the simile the poet uses for her father's illness offer any comfort or cheer. She talks of him going on a metaphorical journey, but imagines him like a child sitting 'on cold trains and windy platforms'. There is something eerie and almost menacing in the description of the 'shadows like long fingers' that sweep past on this imaginary journey.

TIP: Short quotes, woven into the fabric of the sentence, are more effective than long quotes.

This is not necessarily an easy poem to read because we can empathise with the poet's sorrow at her loss. However, it is a haunting depiction of an old man losing his grip on sanity, and it is one that will stay with me for some time to come.

TIP: The examiner will be looking for evidence that you engaged with the poem. Don't just say what you thought the poem meant; say what effect it had on you.

PRESCRIBED POETRY

"Plath makes effective use of language to explore her personal experiences of suffering and to provide occasional glimpses of the redemptive power of love."

Discuss this statement, supporting your answer with reference to both the themes and language found in the poetry of Sylvia Plath on your course.

Note: When you are writing a Paper 2 essay, you must focus on the key words or terms in the question. Remember that the examiner will be coding each answer and making notes in the right-hand margin to indicate where exactly in your essay you directly answered the question. Try to guess what the coding will be and bear it in mind throughout, especially at the planning stage. Highlight the key words. They will usually be centred on themes and language. In this case, the key words are 'language', 'suffering' (Code LS) and 'language', 'love' (Code LL).

You are free to agree or disagree with the statement in whole or in part.

Sample Plan:

- **Child**: blend of suffering and joy; begins with wishes for the child's happiness but ends on a note of darkness and despair
- **Morning Song**: more uplifting than 'Child'; language amusing and loving and poem ends in elation and unity
- **Poppies in July**: utterly despairing; sees only escape from suffering through the 'Dulling and stilling' of drugs
- **The Arrival of the Bee Box**: like 'Morning Song', it ends on an optimistic note. Sense of control over her darkest thoughts

Sample Answer:

In a letter to her mother written two years before her suicide, Sylvia Plath revealed that she was unsure if there was 'any point in trying to bring up children in such a mad, self-destructive world'. Her poetry reveals this conflict between her love of her home and family and her inner torment and suffering in a world she found both hostile and confining. There are times when despair wins out, as in 'Poppies in July' and she longs for the 'Dulling and stilling' of opiates; but there are also glimpses of the redemptive power of love in the poems such as 'Morning Song' in which the poet's feeling of alienation is alleviated by tender feelings for her infant. Although Plath's poetry can be bleak and her descriptions of her suffering heartbreaking, the vivid, imaginative imagery makes her work strikingly memorable and gives us a great insight into the poet's view of the world.

Plath draws upon her own experiences of suffering to great effect in the poem 'Child', while at the same time offering us momentary flashes of the uplifting power of love. Plath's joy at her child's purity and beauty is clear when she says his eye is 'the one absolutely beautiful thing'. This is a powerful image which carries a double meaning. On the one hand, it praises the child's loveliness but on the other hand the word 'one' implies that everything else in the poet's life is somehow tainted or imperfect, which hints at her feelings of despair. Plath allows her to lose herself temporarily in excited visions of the world in which her child will learn so much that is fresh and exotic in 'the zoo of the new'. The language here seems to suggest that Plath's great love for the child will empower her with positivity as she fills her son's life with the fun of 'colour and ducks' and cultural and intellectual beauty of 'grand classical images'. There is a definite feeling of hope for the future in these aspirations for the child's life. However, even in the midst of the list of positives comes a negative. Plath mentions the 'Indian pipe', a flower associated with death and darkness, which now makes her vison of the future seem tinged with darkness and despair. She places it side by side with 'April snowdrops' which bring to mind new life and a sense that summer sun is around the corner. In this simple but powerful line, Plath blends the hopeful and the hopeless. It seems her love for her child will not be enough to pull the poet from the depths of depression and the final stanza of the poem proves this to be the case. In a bleak and despairing image, she compares her life to a dark room which has no gleam of light. She doesn't want her child to suffer 'this troublous / Wringing of hands' and to be spared the anguish and inner turmoil that she suffers. Sadly, the celebration of the child's beauty in this poem is overwhelmed by Plath's personal suffering and inability to break free from it.

TIP: Remember to keep your focus on the question throughout. It is all too easy to fall into the trap of simply analysing the poems without referring back to the question.

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Similarly, in 'Morning Song' we see a mixture of delight and sadness. On the one hand Plath rejoices in her daughter's birth but on the other hand she feels a sense of estrangement and alienation from her child. There is something deeply disturbing in the idea of a mother looking at her child 'blankly' and believing 'I'm no more your mother / Than the cloud that distils a mirror to reflect its own slow / Effacement at the wind's hand'. Plath's suffering here seems to be rooted in the idea that the child's identity will somehow erode her own.

However, 'Morning Song' is a far more uplifting poem than 'Child' and in the second half of the poem the bond between mother and daughter is handled with a tenderness and amusement that gives us a sense of hope. The baby's breath is beautifully described as 'moth-breath' which emphasises the softness, smallness and fragility of the infant. The language Plath uses in the last two stanzas perfectly captures a mother's selfless care for her baby. There is only 'one cry' before the poet stumbles 'cow-heavy and floral / In my Victorian nightgown' to feed the child. The self-deprecating humour in this description of herself shows a more controlled and composed sense of self than is evident in the earlier stanzas. Now she has a task to perform and the 'drafty museum' of the second stanza has vanished, to be replaced by a warm and comforting bedroom in which the poet nurses her baby. Instead of the dark, starless ceiling in 'Child', the poet's view here is of a window which 'Whitens and swallows its dull stars'. Light breaks and the joyous mood is rounded off by the 'clear vowels' of the child which 'rise like balloons' into the air. The final impression, then, is of the redemptive power of love in which the poet can be plucked from her dark thoughts by the bond between herself and her baby.

For Plath, family life brought a blend of celebration and suffering. In 'Child' and 'Morning Song' she is torn between joy and despair, but in 'Poppies in July', it is despair that consumes the poet. The poem was written at the time Plath's marriage was ending and the language reflects the poet's suffering and sense of hopelessness. The very first line of the poem: 'Little poppies, little hell flames' is deeply disturbing. As in 'Child' when she referred to the 'Indian pipe', Plath is able to take something as seemingly innocuous as a flower and skilfully transform it into a rather terrible image of death. The poppy is a symbol of WW1 and the countless dead on the battlefields, but Plath takes that a step further by likening the red colour to the flames of hell. Plath's mental suffering colours her vision of these flowers and her language becomes even more nightmarish when she compares the poppies to 'A mouth just bloodied'. The violence of this image indicates a deeply disturbed state of mind and that is reinforced by the extraordinary but powerful exclamation 'If my mouth could marry a hurt like that!' I find this one of the most compelling descriptions of Plath's inner turmoil. Is she longing for pain as an alternative to the bleakness of despair? Does the word 'marry' in this context mean that she views marriage as a source of violence?

As she cannot 'marry a hurt like that', Plath craves instead for the 'Dulling and stilling' opiates derived from poppies to help her escape a life so bleak and confining that the oblivion of drugs seems a merciful end to the pain. There is no note of hope in this poem: there is merely a heartbreaking desire for annihilation.

Plath also deals with mental turmoil and suffering in 'The Arrival of the Bee Box' but the tone is more uplifting here than it is in the poems I have already discussed. Plath's desire to sink into the 'Dulling and stilling' brought about by drugs in 'Poppies in July' is replaced here by a less drastic approach to the need to escape tormenting thoughts.

The imagery in 'The Arrival of the Bee Box' is like nothing I have ever read before. Plath creates a marvellous picture of the 'box of maniacs' with 'the swarmy feeling of African hands' and the furious rage of a 'Roman mob'. I found the sense of energy and excitement created by these descriptions most engaging. Although the poem can be read as the poet's way of sharing her mental anguish, the pain and suffering here is less raw than that in 'Child' or 'Poppies in July'.

Like 'Morning Song', 'The Arrival of the Bee Box' ends on a note of hope for the future. Plath decides that the box is 'only temporary' and resolves to be 'sweet God' and set the bees free. By so doing, Plath is not only showing a kindly and almost loving spirit in her dealing with the bees but is also treating herself with more kindness than is obvious in some of her other poems. If the bees represent dark and dangerous thoughts, then her releasing them will release herself from torment also. This is an act of self love but it does show that such an emotion can pull the poet back from the brink of the abyss at times. Sadly, this moment of optimism proved short-lived and within a year of writing the poem, Plath had taken her own life.

Although Plath's life was a tragically short one, the skill and honesty with which she expresses both her suffering and the all-too-brief moments of joy which temporarily illuminated some of her darkest times ensure that she will live on through her poetry.